DELMORE,

OR

MODERN FRIENDSHIP.

1134.

1

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MRS. ROBERTS.

——— "There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face;—
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust."

SHAKESPEARE.

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TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS OF WALES.

MADAM,

I AVOW, with gratitude and exultation, the condescending protection, and liberal encou-

ragement, which have been extended to me by One who unites every thing that is illustrious and dignified, with all that is gentle, amiable, and beneficent. Should my humble efforts amuse an hour of leisure, or dispel a momentary anxiety, from which the most eminent virtue and exalted rank cannot, in this transitory life, be secure; I shall then enjoy the pleasing satisfaction, that I have not unsuccessfully endeavoured to lighten my vast debt of obliga-

tion for your generous and benevolent patronage.

I have the Honour to be,

With the highest Respect,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

Most obliged,

And obedient Servant,

Clarence Place. D. ROBERTS.

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DELMORE,

OR,

MODERN FRIENDSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

THE bells of ——— rang gratulatory peals, to welcome the arrival of the noble family of DELMORE at the magnificent seat of their ancestors; a numerous tenantry and splendid retinue diffused and confirmed the universal hilarity and general satisfaction, that beamed in every countenance and glowed in every heart, on the antici-

pated renewal of the generous hospitality, and unremitting festivities that dignified and characterised the Castle of Melrose. In the trophied halls of the Castle, where the feudatories and vassals of his illustrious progenitors banqueted, the numerous tenants were continually regaled by their munificent lord: the rude display of ancient hospitality was succeeded by the elegance of modern entertainments; and the brilliant exhibition of a fashionable fête superseded the boisterous revelry of former carousals. The influence which the Marquis of Melrose had thus obtained over the minds of the inhabitants of ———, was confirmed by those habitual prepossessions which emanate from a title derived from a long race of illustrious ancestors, strengthened and cemented by a princely revenue and powerful alliances. This ascendancy was still far-

ther increased by the condescending affability of the Marchioness. Her considerate attention to, and generous relief of, their wants and grievances, fascinated every mind: their enthusiastic veneration approximated to idolatry; and the recommendation of the family of Delmore was alone sufficient to insure the return of two members to parliament for that borough.

DELMORE Marquis of MELROSE, could enumerate amongst his ancestors some of the most consummate statesmen and celebrated generals that have adorned the annals of the British Nation. His great-grandfather contributed in an eminent degree to establish the House of Brunswick on the throne of England; he was powerfully instrumental in promoting and consolidating the revolution of 1688; and the glory of his actions blazed with

resplendent lustre amidst the statesmen and heroes that dignified the brilliant days of Anne and George the First. In contemplating his origin, the Marquis, in proud elation of heart, justly considered his house as exalted by the virtues, decorated by the talents, and emblazoned by the glorious achievements of his ancestors. The lineal descendant of such a race, he deemed himself the sacred depositary of their virtues, the jealous guardian of their privileges, and the zealous asserter of their honour: he uniformly endeavoured to support the dignity and splendour of his rank: and the transmission of that title to his posterity, unimpaired and undiminished in lustre and consequence, was the dearest and most unceasing object of his ambition. Impressed with a due consideration of his own exaltation, he neither descended from proud inde-

pendence, to become the fawning sycophant of a court; nor prostituted the dignity of a British Nobleman to the intrigues or purposes of faction. His parliamentary conduct was uniformly directed to preserve the rights and liberties of the people; to support the dignity and honour of the crown; and exalt the character and consequence of his country. To every measure calculated to insure the prosperity and increase the glory of the nation, he afforded his most cordial assent; of those principles which militated against the happiness, or intrenched on the liberties of the people, or unnecessarily augmented the influence of the executive, he was the uniform and zealous opposer. His extensive influence, powerful connexions, and splendid fortune, exposed him to the incessant solicitation and artful in-

ticements of both parties; and though he resisted the dazzling allurements of the minister, and the temptations of emolument and ambition, he did not enter into the intrigues of party, nor unnecessarily embarrass nor factiously oppose the measures of government. Every vote was dictated by the most exalted patriotism, by the purest principles, and the most inflexible integrity. Whilst he constantly consulted the real glory of the crown, as the fountain from which his own honours flowed; he studiously laboured to augment the consequence and prosperity of the country, and to protect the rights and liberties of the people. He contemplated the British constitution with the most ardent admiration; — that majestic fabric reared by the wisdom, cemented by the blood, and consolidated by the virtues of our ancestors,

was the favourite object of his adoration; and his fervent hope was that it might be *immortal.*

The Marquis of Melrose united to inflexible honour and incorruptible integrity, a strong and penetrating discernment; his mind was enriched with the inexhaustible stores of antiquity; his erudition was extensive; he was deeply versed in the laws and government of other countries, and intimately acquainted with the constitution and legal polity of his own. His judgment was solid, and his genius comprehensive. His private virtues reflected lustre on his public conduct; —an affectionate husband,—a tender parent,—a firm and steady friend,—his tenants acquired independence and opulence under a generous landlord;—and a numerous retinue manifested their love and veneration for a liberal and indulgent master. His splendid

establishment displayed, in every department, a just magnificence without profusion. In the discharge of his engagements he was rigidly punctual; to the performance of his promises he was minutely and scrupulously attentive. He possessed, indeed, great, rather than amiable qualities; every person esteemed, but few loved him;—a rigid integrity and inflexible constancy induced him to make little allowance for the weaknesses, errors, and irregularities of others: a proud consciousness of his own dignity rendered him haughty to his equals, and distant and reserved to his inferiors; he preserved a stateliness of deportment to his friends; and in the bosom of his family, and even in his most convivial hours, though he displayed the most polished urbanity of manners, he never relaxed into unbecoming mirth, or indecorous familiarity.

The Marquis of Melrose married the only daughter of the Duke of Belville; and by this alliance he obtained a great increase of fortune, and a considerable accession of consequence. The Marchioness united to a beautiful form, the most bewitching sweetness of temper and unbounded goodness of heart; her understanding was however confined, and her acquirements extremely limited. With such a contracted mind and pliancy of disposition, she implicitly yielded to the firmer and more commanding character of her husband; and his sentiments and opinions were adopted as the rule of her conduct, on every subject of importance. A liberal and benevolent heart prompted her to administer comfort to the afflicted, to relieve the wretched, and to succour the oppressed. She had been fostered in these feelings, and encouraged to gratify

her predominant inclinations by the profuse generosity of an indulgent father; her natural disposition, confirmed by the precepts and example of her parent, dilated into the most expansive philanthropy, and, to use the language of our immortal bard, "She had a tear for pity, and a hand open as day for melting charity." She combined with those amiable qualities a sweetness of disposition and engaging affability, that delighted every heart: the inhabitants of —— idolized her name; the indigent recorded her generosity with enthusiastic rapture; and even their children were accustomed, by habit and example, to lisp the praises of their benevolent patroness. From her earliest infancy she had revelled in all the luxuries and indulgences of modern refinement; and the princely fortune which devolved to her on her father's death, amply supplied

the power of gratifying her propensities for elegant exhibitions, and in the magnificence and taste of her entertainments she outvied even oriental splendour. Her predilection for superb decoration and elegant assemblies was unbridled and almost uncontrolled; the Marquis was not displeased with the occasional display of pomp and grandeur; whilst the Marchioness, in compliance with her husband's desire, was content to limit the number and preclude the frequency of her brilliant parties.

Two sons and a daughter were the only surviving fruits of their union. Their eldest son, Lord Arlington, had nearly attained the age of twenty-one: a graceful person and polished manners, united with an amiable suavity of disposition, endeared him to his family and connexions, and fascinated every person within the sphere of their

influence. Unfortunately, an intellect of very limited powers was enshrined in a prepossessing exterior; a delicate and feeble constitution had precluded constant and unremitted application to study; his understanding was consequently but little enlarged by knowledge, or enlightened by literature and science. Though he could not aspire to the dignified pre-eminence of directing the councils, or hurling the thunder of Britain against her foes; if he was little qualified to charm and command a listening senate with splendid eloquence and periods harmoniously rounded, or to terrify his opponents by the invectives of nervous eloquence, he could boast of those gentle and milder virtues, that constitute the principal delight and cement of social intercourse. He was tolerably versed in ancient literature;—he spoke the French and Italian languages with fluency and preci-

sion;—in dancing he eminently excelled;—even in the robust exercise of fencing he was a proficient;—and of music he possessed a critical and accurate knowledge; and his performance on the violoncello was distinguished for correctness of taste and brilliancy of execution. His precarious health and tender frame required the most unremitting care, and experienced the tenderest attentions of maternal solicitude. From his earliest infancy the Marchioness had watched over him with the fondest anxiety; and the constant anticipation of being bereft of an amiable son made her doubly sensible of his worth and merit. Superadded to those endearing emotions and delicate affections which agitate and entwine round a mother's heart, in contemplating and guarding the feeble constitution of a beloved child, so susceptibly obnoxious to every dis-

temper; the graceful form and polished manners of Lord Arlington enchanted the heart and gratified the vanity of the Marchioness: and his accomplishments acquired augmented importance, and blazed with redoubled lustre, in the partial eyes of a doting parent. His father beheld with tender concern and the liveliest regret his uncertain and declining health; the first physicians in England, and the ablest medical practitioners of France had successively, but ineffectually, exerted their skill and knowledge: by their advice the Marquis accompanied his son to Italy, in the fond expectation that his constitution would be renovated by the salubrious and balsamic air of that delightful climate. The alarming symptoms of an incipient pulmonary complaint had indeed yielded to the influence of a healthful atmosphere; but though the ravaging hand of dis-

ease was arrested, his frame was not invigorated; and he still preserved a delicate, and almost consumptive appearance. The dawning virtues of his son had superinduced the Marquis to indulge the sanguine hope, that as Lord Arlington's intellectual powers expanded and matured, they would manifest the indications of a great and aspiring mind; every endeavour to accomplish these wishes and confirm these expectations was unceasingly exerted; the labours of the most erudite masters were unremittingly employed to cultivate his taste, to form his sentiments, and enlighten his understanding. The exertions of the Marquis were uniformly directed to qualify his son to take a distinguished part in the government of the British empire. He ardently hoped that his successor would extend the influence

and augment the power of his family by his parliamentary importance; and he was conscious that the possession of splendid talents, extensive information, and nervous eloquence, must be superadded to hereditary dignities, to acquire eminence or ascendancy in the legislature of this country. The limited capacity and moderate views of the son obscured the brilliant hopes, and blasted the ambitious projects of the father.

The poignancy of regret was however alleviated, and the corrosion of disappointed ambition mitigated, by the opening virtues and promising talents of his youngest son Lord Henry Delmore. The education of Lord Henry had been committed to the superintendance and direction of Mr. Ainsworth, (one of the most finished scholars of the age);

and under such auspices, the pupil's progress in literature was commensurate to the ability and erudition of the preceptor. Lord Henry was a complete master of the classics; — he was deeply read in ancient and modern history; his taste was refined, and his sentiments formed by repeated perusal of the works of the purest writers of antiquity; — his reasoning powers were strengthened and a habit of attention fixed, by the study of the mathematics; his mind was enlightened by ethical and metaphysical disquisitions, and his view of nature and art was enlarged by genuine experimental philosophy. His penetrating intellect, ever desirous of acquiring knowledge, was sharpened by the unremitting exertions of his father and Mr. Ainsworth: from his earliest infancy he had been encouraged, and even seduced to enquire

concerning every subject with which he was unacquainted, and never to desist from prosecuting his investigation and pursuing his researches, until he had obtained complete information:—hours had the Marquis devoted to these purposes, listening with patience, and even pleasure, to the repeated interrogatories, and resolving the doubts and difficulties of his intelligent child. Lord Henry was instructed to dress his sentiments in the most polished diction; and to reason on every subject with logical precision. Unceasing efforts had been exerted to improve and perfect his elocution; and the enraptured father listened with glowing admiration, whilst, with harmonious enunciation and graceful action, he declaimed the thundering invectives of Demosthenes, or the mellifluous periods of Cicero. The taste and inclinations

of Lord Henry concurred with the hopes and wishes of his father; he frequently declined to accompany his mother to her fashionable parties; that he might attend the debates in the House of Commons; and often has the embryo senator devoted his nights to listen to the lofty and splendid declamation of a Pitt; the comprehensive and perspicuous reasoning of a Fox; the manly convincing eloquence of a Grey; or the keen satire, brilliant wit, and beautiful illustrations of a Sheridan. Lord Henry united to resplendent talents and a vigorous intellect the most benevolent affections; an open, generous, and unsupicious temper; a liberality that prompted him to relieve distress, in whatever shape it might be presented; and an ardour of sentiment and warmth of feeling which, though it occasionally transported him beyond

the pale of prudence and moderation, more frequently served only to burnish his other virtues. He had just entered his twentieth year, when he was destined to depart for the continent, and his journey was only delayed that he might assist at the magnificent festival, with which the Marquis and Marchioness of Melrose intended to celebrate Lord Arlington's arrival at the age of twenty-one.

CHAPTER II.

A FEW days after the arrival of the Delmore family at Melrose Castle, they received a visit from Lord and Lady Ossington, and their two daughters. Lady Ossington was the intimate and confidential friend of the Marchioness of Melrose; a congeniality of sentiment had originally induced, and afterwards cemented their friendship; a similar taste and predominant inclination for splendid entertainments, crouded routs, and brilliant assemblies, rendered them, in town, constant and inseparable associates. Her husband was submis-

sively subservient to Lady Ossington's caprices, and gratified her in every indulgence; his princely fortune was implicitly devoted to her controul and direction; and Lord Ossington appeared to be created, only to confer titled distinction on his lady, and to serve as a conduit to convey the means of refined frivolity and fashionable luxury. In his parliamentary conduct he was equally under the guidance of others; he regarded the Marquis of Melrose as the paragon of wisdom, he consulted him as an oracle on every occasion, and his mind obeyed every impulse which it received from his friend.

The preliminary salutations had scarcely passed, and those unmeaning, but never omitted enquiries relative to each other's health, and a thousand frivolous interrogatories concerning their mutual acquaintance, had barely

subsided, when Mrs. Mansell and her son were announced. The eyes of Lady Ossington, and her daughters were immediately riveted on the elegant person of Mr. Mansell, who bowed gracefully to the ladies; congratulated the Marchioness, in the most respectful manner, on her return to Melrose; politely shook hands with Lord Arlington; and made the most particular enquiries concerning the Marquis and Lord Henry.

Mrs. Mansell and her son were frequent and welcome visitors at the castle. — This lady was the purveyor of the domestic intelligence of the vicinity; every occurrence which interested the inhabitants, and the private scandal that circulated through the borough of ———, were by her indefatigable industry and flippant volubility disembogued on the Marchioness; and amidst a sterility of real

circumstances she could liberally draw on her inventive powers for a copious supply of matter. A lady thus qualified, who was always ready to play a rubber at whist, or take a hand at cassino, could not fail agreeably to relieve the tædium of an evening in the country. The uncommon abilities and extensive knowledge of young Mansell attracted the particular notice of, and received the most distinguishing marks of approbation from, the Marquis of Melrose. He particularly recommended him to the friendship of his sons, and was never more gratified than in seeing them cherishing his acquaintance, and soliciting his intimacy. After the prolific brains and retentive memory of Mrs. Mansell had been employed and exhausted in diverting the Marchioness and Lady Ossington with the scandal of the place, they retired to give their

opinions concerning some elegant dresses and superb ornaments, that had just arrived from town, and to examine the decorations and improvements, which were nearly completed to adorn the castle on the approaching fête. Lord Ossington, by the direction of his lady, descended to the library, to consult the Marquis of Melrose on a projected purchase; or, perhaps her Ladyship was anxious to give Lord Arlington every opportunity and facility to renew his attentions to Miss Ossington, in the fond hope that their budding attachment might be ripened into a union between her daughter and that nobleman. A prevailing desire to aggrandize her family, stimulated Lady Ossington to facilitate and encourage the growth of their affection; and as Lord Ossington could bestow a splendid portion on his daughter, she was convinced that the

Marquis and Marchioness of Melrose would countenance, rather than oppose so advantageous a connexion.

Miss Ossington was now in the bloom of youth and loveliness; in stature she was above the middle size; her form was, however, finely proportioned; her features were not regularly beautiful; but the mild lustre of her eyes, the animating glow of countenance that spoke the benignity of the heart, were irresistibly fascinating: her commanding appearance and dignified carriage were softened by the most engaging sweetness of temper, and refined by the most bewitching affability of manners. She was altogether an elegant and accomplished girl; she was mistress of the French and Italian languages; her taste in music was correct and scientific; her voice possessed such compass and flexibility, that she could

execute the most difficult airs with facility and precision, and the melodious singer accompanied her vocal efforts by her exquisite performance on the harp. A congeniality of disposition and sentiment, assimilating their pursuits, first attracted the notice of Lord Arlington; the unaffected benevolence of her heart, the amiable simplicity of her manners, increased and secured the prepossession, which her charms and accomplishments had originally excited. Her understanding was highly cultivated; and her moral taste was refined and polished by the constant perusal of the purest modern writers. Though she was constrained to live amidst the bustle and tumult of fashionable life, and obliged, in compliance with her mother's wishes, to participate in those splendid assemblies and brilliant routs, where the voluptuaries of dis-

tinction seek a momentary refuge from lassitude and *ennui;* where the young and old, the beautiful and deformed indiscriminately sacrifice on the altars of dissipation and fashion; Miss Ossington usually devoted a considerable portion of the morning to perfect herself in music and drawing; and she frequently resisted the solicitations and importunities of her mother to attend the opera or masquerade, that she might improve her mind by a favourite work, or enjoy the amusing and instructive society of a few select acquaintance. She had obtained so great an ascendancy over Lord Arlington; he entertained so exalted an idea of her taste and sentiments, that he seldom pronounced his judgment on any musical production, or expressed his opinion of any author, until he had consulted, and obtained the sanction of

Miss Ossington. While the enamoured lord was listening to the observations and remarks of his fair mistress, who was examining and criticising the music of the Opera *Castore e Polluce*, that Lord Arlington had been practising; Mansell was flirting with, and endeavouring to entertain, the younger sister. He had successively touched on every subject that his fertile imagination and lively fancy could suggest to amuse her. She was almost compelled to be pleased with his vivacious sallies and sprightly effusions; but though Miss Emma Ossington's vanity would have been gratified by Mansell's attentions in public; though she would have exulted in mortifying a crowd of envious misses and disappointed rivals by monopolizing the devoirs of the handsomest fellow in the room; she did not consider him an object worthy

of a serious conquest; and she was secretly piqued and chagrined, that she was not receiving these compliments and assiduities from an ennobled admirer.

Miss Emma Ossington had scarcely attained the age of eighteen; her figure was ungraceful, awkward, and inelegant; in stature, she exceeded her sister; and her present appearance indicated, that as she advanced in years, her form would be coarse and almost masculine; her features were irregular and ill-assorted; and her countenance displayed to a skilful physiognomist the infallible indications of supercilious pride and corroding envy. She was arrogant, haughty, and unfeeling; her mind was unenlightened by knowledge; her sentiments were vulgar and unelevated; and her taste capricious and unrefined. Sarcastic remarks and point-

ed malicious observations maintained, however, in ordinary minds, the appearance of superior intelligence; and the undiscerning frequently mistook these illusive corruscations for the genial light of wit and reason. She received the instructions of her masters with indifference and almost disgust; she assiduously, but unsuccessfully, endeavoured to excel in dancing, as that accomplishment was essential to a lady, whose whole delight was centered in the dissipation and amusements of a fashionable winter in town. She then shone in the zenith of her happiness, when her mornings were absorbed in giving audiences to milliners, jewellers, and dress-makers; in rattling through the principal streets; and visiting the most gaudy shops of the metropolis; and the remainder of the day consumed by the important ceremonial

of the toilet; in hurrying to the opera; or joining in the splendid parties of her noble friends. The unintermitting endeavours of Emma Ossington were directed to attract the regard, and engage the affections of a man of rank and fortune; the elevation of a title would alone soothe her pride, and gratify her vanity; and the possession of considerable opulence, was necessary to supply her unbridled desire of indulging in ostentatious parade and luxurious profusion. She had pointed all the artillery of her charms against Lord Arlington; but his bosom was impenetrable to her attacks: her artful allurements were eclipsed by the brighter fascinations of her sister. A mind thus corroded with envy, was agitated and discontented by contemplating their felicity; her eyes darted malignant glances at Lord Arlington

and her sister; their countenances animated with joy and rapture, excruciated her envenomed soul; and Emma Ossington experienced the most gratifying emotions, when their interesting conversation was interrupted by the entrance of her mother, with the Marchioness, and Mrs. Mansell.

Reader! if you are desirous of knowing what passed between the lovers; imagine to yourself all that love could inspire, affection dictate, or delicacy receive.

Lady Ossington was expatiating on the dresses and ornaments which the Marchioness had exhibited to her inspection, and profusely applauding her dear friend's taste and selection; she was enraptured with the improvements that were expediting in the

castle, and declared to her daughters, that the approaching festival would surpass, in skilfulness of design and splendour of appearance, any fête that she had witnessed.

During the time Lady Ossington was explaining, with increasing volubility and insufferable prolixity, even the most minute alterations and improvements; Mansell, whose patience was exhausted, and whose attention was fatigued by this uninteresting detail, had strolled towards the window, and carelessly glancing his eye over the picturesque scenery, he observed that a carriage was flying with rapidity through the park. Her Ladyship was still dilating on these important topics with fluent flippancy, when her descriptions were interrupted by the arrival of Lady Georgina Delmore, followed by her aunt Lady Sarah Temple and her

cousin Louisa. Whilst the ladies were congratulating each other, the lively Lady Georgina embraced her mother, exclaiming, "O my dear mamma! I am so glad to return home; I was so tired of remaining with grandmamma; and aunt Temple has been so cross to Louisa and me."

She then shook hands with Mr. Mansell, and flew to her brother. After saluting him, she gaily said,

"Oh Arlington! what have you been saying to Miss Ossington that makes her have so fine a colour?"

Miss Ossington's cheeks were suffused with a deeper crimson, at the thoughtless sally of this giddy girl.

"How is papa?" continued she; "where is brother Henry? I suppose he is poring over some old musty books, or listening to papa's long speeches."

"Lord Henry Delmore," sarcastically observed Miss Emma Ossington,

"seldom condescends to honour the ladies with his company."

"Oh! I am sure that's very ill-natured," retorted Lady Georgina: "for, Henry is never better pleased, than when he is with his cousin Louisa and me."

Miss Emma fixed her scrutinizing eyes on the countenance of Louisa Temple; but, without allowing her time to reply, the sprightly girl darted out of the room with Louisa, and descended to the library. The amiable Marchioness, though she was delighted at the return of her charming daughter, had not overlooked her flippant remarks; she requested that the company would consider them as the innocent sallies of a giddy unreflecting girl. Such an advocate was irresistible; and even Lady Sarah Temple's stately reserve relaxed, and her formal countenance brightened

at the condescending apologies of her sister.

Lady Sarah Temple was the only sister of the Marquis of Melrose; she was married at an early age to the Honourable Colonel Temple, the eldest son of Lord Aubeny: by whom she had one daughter. Their union was, however, of short duration. About two years after their marriage, at a dinner given by the officers of Colonel Temple's regiment to the principal inhabitants of Belfast and its neighbourhood, the Colonel engaged in a political controversy with a gentleman of that town. They maintained their respective opinions, with such pertinacious vehemence and inflexible obstinacy, that their passions were inflamed even to the intoxication of their reason; and in the heat of discussion, some expressions escaped from his opponent which the Colonel considered

to derogate from the honour and character of a gentleman: he insisted therefore on these observations being retracted or explained away; but, as the gentleman would not apologize for, nor qualify his expressions, the Colonel was compelled, by the barbarous laws of *honour*, to challenge him to the field; where, by the first fire of his antagonist, the Colonel received a mortal wound.

Since the death of her husband, Lady Sarah had been domesticated with the Delmore family; and her daughter and Lady Georgina had been companions from their infancy.

Lady Sarah Temple displayed the same loftiness of deportment and stateliness of demeanour that characterized her brother; but the qualities, which distinguished him, degenerated in her to the most odious imperfections: — the pride of noble

birth was debased by superciliousness; dignified reserve was disgraced by insulting contempt, and the most mortifying arrogance to her inferiors. She was illiberal, selfish, and unfeeling; the authoritative mode in which she delivered her sentiments, entrapped the injudicious and unreflecting; "Subtlety was mistaken for wisdom;" and confidence for superior sagacity. Though haughty and unaccommodating to others, the artful Lady Sarah could mould her behaviour, and adapt her observations, to humour the caprices, and indulge the foibles of her sister. The dogmatical and commanding tone with which she uttered her remarks, had impressed the indiscriminating mind of the Marchioness with an elevated opinion of her superior attainments; and by the united means of adulation, subtlety, and dissimulation, she had obtained a complete

ascendancy over her sister. The domestic arrangments of the castle were committed to her management; and the education of Lady Georgina was intrusted to her care. The indolent disposition and unostentatious character of the Marchioness rendered Lady Sarah the dispenser of her extensive charities and liberal donations; and as, through her *instrumentality*, the favours and largesses of her sister were bestowed, she acquired considerable influence and augmented authority over the numerous dependents on the house of Delmore.—— Her haughty, supercilious behaviour, her inflexible gravity and cold formality, her rigid observance of the minutest punctilios of decorum, disgusted the younger part of the family: they were continually devising some experiment to thwart her; and so perpetually ridiculing her stateliness and reserve,

that the powerful interposition of the Marchioness was indispensably required to insure to her even an appearance of respect and attention.

The Marchioness experienced no inconsiderable satisfaction in observing that the lowering clouds on her sister's brows were dissipating; and fearful lest her gloomy imagination might again ruminate on Lady Georgina's remark, she endeavoured to divert Lady Sarah Temple's mind, by repeated enquiries concerning the health of her mother, and by a variety of questions relative to the different families of that neighbourhood.

Perceiving Miss Ossington carelessly turning over the leaves of the new opera, which was lying on the table, the Marchioness requested her to favour the company with the beautiful air in the second act. Allured by the sound of the music, Lady

Georgina Delmore and her cousin Louisa gently stole into the room. Scarcely had the distinguished performer finished this delightful composition, when Lord Ossington returned, accompanied by the Marquis of Melrose, and Lord Henry Delmore. Lady Ossington exclaimed against the dullness and insipidity of a rural retreat; she declared that she should be devoured by *ennui* and listlessness, if she continued much longer in the country; and, avowing her intention of immediately visiting a watering-place after the celebration of the promised fête at Melrose Castle, she endeavoured to persuade her *dear Marchioness* to participate her enjoyments by joining the party.

"I am enchanted," said Miss Emma Ossington, whose bosom panted, and whose cheeks glowed with the thrilling anticipation of renewed plea-

sures, "at the prospect of speedily emancipating from the tiresome uniformity of the odious country. I see nothing to admire in shady groves, enamelled meadows, and purling streams; they are only calculated for despairing lovers and antiquated spinsters, who cannot relish the elegant refinements of fashionable life. What can be more horrible than to be condemned to the society of rustic squires and their vulgar families, or occasionally to mix even with village parsons and our brutal tenants! I verily believe that the reformers, who declaim against the vices and dissipation of their superiors, have invented this purgatory, and doomed the votaries of fashion to a penance of six months, as an expiation of their imaginary offences."

"I am always sorry to dissent from the ladies," observed the Marquis of Melrose; "but, in my opinion, the

country presents an inexhaustible source of gratification to an unsophisticated and reflecting mind.—When I ride round my extensive estates, and contemplate the lands groaning with the bending harvest; my bosom glows with conscious exultation in reflecting that the product of these fields secures competence and ease to their cultivators; diffuses cheerfulness and plenty to an industrious population; and administers the means of magnificence, hospitality, and benevolence to their lord. My tenants are the firmest and most legitimate props of my house; and I consider a British yeomanry as the brightest ornaments and strongest support of their country.—It is the sacred and indispensable duty of every great proprietor of land to reside, at least, some part of the year on his estate; he can then examine the situation of his respective tenants; he can

personally observe and redress their grievances, and secure them from the oppressive and griping hand of an avaricious steward: surely some portion of the opulence of the landlord should be expended, in liberal hospitality, amongst those beings, whose unceasing toil and laborious endeavours are cheerfully exerted and unremittingly employed to obtain it. I cannot sufficiently express my admiration of the noble institutions of my exalted friends the Duke of Woburn and Mr. Holkham, for the advancement of agriculture, and the improvement of cattle.—The Romans, indeed, decreed a *civic crown* to the man who preserved the life of a Citizen: but what higher honours and brighter rewards are due to those elevated characters whose comprehensive views and benevolent exertions are directed to ameliorate the condition of society; to

secure happiness and content to an industrious community; and scatter cheerfulness and plenty over a smiling land!—Such examples of splendid hospitality and liberal encouragement should stimulate every man of fortune and consideration to pursue a similar career, with unabated ardour and inflexible perseverance."

Lord Ossington cordially agreed with the sentiments of his noble friend: but as he never presumed to dissent from the remarks of his Lady, he preserved an inviolable silence: and the Marchioness of Melrose, though her heart beat in unison with every wish and observation of Lady Ossington, was so accustomed to regard the opinion of her husband with implicit deference, that she maintained a similar taciturnity.

Lady Ossington, who had listened to these observations with astonish-

ment and mortification, and almost doubted the evidence of her senses, to hear such remarks from a man of his Lordship's rank, spleneticly rejoined:

"Surely, my Lord, you would not immure a woman of taste and fashion in an antiquated castle; and condemn her to the insipid monotony of the country, deprived of those elegant diversions and brilliant parties that constitute the sovereign delight of elevated life and consign her half the year

'To harmless plain-work, and to croaking rooks,
'Old-fashion'd halls, dull aunts, and godly books!'

If the amusing varieties and eccentric entertainments that follow each other in such charming succession at a watering-place, did not intervene to dissipate the hours, I never could languish through the tedious summer."

"I cannot be supposed," replied

the Marquis, "to desire that persons of rank and fortune should be fettered by any unpleasant pursuits, much less would I wish to restrict them from elegant society, or doom them to a perpetual association with their inferiors; but in my opinion, some relaxation, from the bustle and fatigue of an eternal succession of amusements, is essentially necessary to recruit their health, and renovate their bloom, after the dissipation and voluptuousness of a fashionable winter. In the crouded places of summer resort, the frivolity and luxury of a town life are only transferred; and the votaries of pleasure, instead of re-establishing their constitutions by the salubrious breezes of the sea, by temperate diet, salutary exercise, and early hours, impair their health by the pestiferous effluvia of heated rooms; and exhaust

their spirits by the distractions and vigils of the gaming-table."

Delmore was too well acquainted with his father's invincible predilection for the country, and too firmly convinced of his inveterate prejudice against a watering-place, to hazard his displeasure or to irritate his passions by opposition. He considered also that the Marquis had probably expressed his dislike in stronger terms from a secret desire of satirizing the pursuits and ridiculing the sentiments of Lady Ossington. Her flippant Ladyship turning to Mansell, peevishly observed, "Are you also so enamoured with rustication? do you experience such delight in an agricultural fête?"

Mansell, who had frequently, in compliance with her Ladyship's avowed inclinations, declaimed against the monotonous insipidity of a country-

life, experienced no inconsiderable embarrassment from her interrogatories: he was resolved not to oppose the opinions of the Marquis; he was also desirous of ingratiating himself with Lady Ossington; but being so pointedly called on for his sentiments, he was reduced to the provoking dilemma of either differing from Lord Melrose, or appearing versatile and inconsistent: he therefore endeavoured by modifying his observations, to adapt them to their respective palates. He declared that he cordially assented to every remark which had been so irresistibly and conclusively urged by the Marquis of Melrose; but perceiving the clouds of dissatisfaction collecting on Lady Ossington's countenance, he artfully observed, that as his own station in society rendered him entirely unrestricted by his pursuits, he had no aversion to relieve the uniformity of a

country-life, by the enlivening gaiety and amusing variety of a watering-place. — "The company, however, constitutes in my mind, the principal, if not the sole, attraction of any place; and I shall always consider the country as a paradisaical retreat," observed Mansell, turning to the ladies, "when it possesses such fascination and loveliness."

This felicitous compliment, uttered with his usual grace and elegance, produced an electrical effect on Lady Ossington; she laughingly observed that he must be prepared with an additional stock of wit and vivacity by the day on which the Delmore family intended to honour her with their company. Mansell bowed;—and Lady Ossington's carriage being announced, the Ossington family departed for Arley Grove.

CHAPTER III.

The Marchioness of Melrose and her sister were incessantly occupied in devising and superintending the alterations and improvements of the Castle; and the Marquis was forming the necessary arrangements with his steward. The most eminent artists were employed to decorate the interior; the walls resounded with the labours of the different workmen; the house and grounds were crouded with the peasantry; and the combined efforts of taste, ingenuity, and industry, were exerted to give additional splendour and magnificence to the approaching

fête. Superadded to these avocations, the Marquis of Melrose was engaged in some family settlements with his eldest son, and deeply interested in a political negociation with the most considerable members of the corporation, and in canvassing the inhabitants of the borough of ——. The present member for that town had been returned to parliament by the Delmore interest; he was nominated as the *locum-tenens* of Lord Arlington, on the express condition that he should vacate his seat when that nobleman attained the age of twenty-one.—These important occupations absorbed the time of the Delmore family.

One evening as Lord Henry Delmore and his brother, who had strolled to Belmont house to visit their friend Mansell, were returning to the Castle, their attention was attracted by the sight of a beautiful girl running with

affrighted looks and breathless agitation. The lovely trembler flew to Lord Henry Delmore; and, under the irresistible impressions of terror, sought protection from the danger that had alarmed her. Some period elapsed, before the agitated and almost senseless girl could recover herself sufficiently to be sensible of her situation, or explain the occasion of her fear: during this time, as she rested on Lord Henry's bosom, he had sufficient time to contemplate the most bewitching face, and a form moulded by the hand of nature in her most indulgent mood. She appeared about twelve years of age; her dress was simply elegant; a gipsy hat, tied with pea-green ribbons, enveloped the auburn locks which profusely shaded her animated and interesting countenance. When her trepidation had a little subsided, her cheeks were suffused with

blushes, at finding herself supported by a gentleman: as soon as she could recover any degree of composure, the trembling girl apologized for the liberty which, under the impulse of inordinate terror, she had presumed to take. Lord Henry and his brother, whose benevolent and susceptible hearts were considerably interested, eagerly pressed her to develope the cause of her alarm. The lovely innocent artlessly replied, that she had been walking with her maid to a neighbouring farmer's, and afterwards strolling into the adjoining wood to gather some wild strawberries, she had inadvertently separated from the servant; and while she was endeavouring to rejoin her, some rude boys, who were hunting rabbits, had insulted her, and incited their dogs to molest and terrify her. She informed her noble protectors that she lived with Mr. Arnold, about a

mile and a half from Arley Grove, the seat of Lord Ossington; and if they would condescend to protect her beyond the limits of the wood, she would return home. She appeared, however, to the brothers, not sufficiently recovered to undertake so long a walk. Whilst they were deliberating, Lord Arlington observed their mother's carriage; and vociferating to the coachman to stop, he immediately flew to her: he succinctly explained the situation of the engaging child; and the amiable Marchioness, with the most condescending affability, insisted on the lovely stranger taking a seat in the carriage. Lord Arlington instantaneously returned to his brother and his sweet companion, with the polite request of his mother; and disclosing the name of his family, pressed her to accept the invitation. The beautiful innocent endeavoured to ex-

cuse herself from accepting the kind offer, observing: "Mr. Arnold will be distracted, and poor Anna terrified out of her senses at my absence; as they promised mamma, that they would guard me as their dearest treasure."

Lord Henry declared that a servant should be immediately dispatched to apprise Mr. Arnold of the cause of her absence. — Being thus delivered from anxiety on his account, she yielded to their solicitations, and accompanied the noble family to Melrose Castle.

Whilst the lovely girl was proceeding with her exalted friends, her maid was distractedly running through every part of the wood, calling out for her young mistress. Poor Anna, having met with the son of a neighbouring farmer, and being very agreeably engaged in listening to her lover, had almost forgotten her young charge; but

wondering, at length, at her absence, she began to entertain some apprehensions for her safety; and immediately explored every part of the thicket to discover her. Finding her researches were ineffectual, she concluded, after the first emotions of her alarm had subsided, that her young mistress, having separated from, and being unable to rejoin her, had returned home. She therefore proceeded to Mr. Arnold's; and as she entered the garden, the good old man, surprised at seeing her alone, impatiently enquired, where she had left her young mistress!

"Is she not returned?" exclaimed the terrified girl.— —A thousand fears agitated Mr. Arnold; the most distracting suspicions darted across his mind; there was a mystery attending her, which the worthy old man had unceasingly, but ineffectually endeavoured to penetrate;—the education

she received, and the accomplishments she was instructed in by her mother, so superior to her ostensible situation, convinced him that she was a person of superior condition;—he recollected the parting injunctions of her mother,—and his own promises, so sacredly and solemnly pledged, to watch with unremitting care over her darling child.——He inveighed in the bitterest terms of indignation against Anna, for her remissness and inattention;—he compelled the weeping girl to repeat every particular of their excursion, and to point out the precise spot where they separated;—and hurrying out of the garden with precipitate steps and disordered countenance, he proceeded through every field, and visited every place where his lost charge had rambled. He questioned, with eager curiosity, every person that he met, whether they had seen a young lady

of her description;—but receiving no satisfactory information, he was on the point of returning home, hopeless and almost broken-hearted; when, observing an old woodman, he renewed his enquiries. The man related, that he had seen a young lady of her age and appearance.—"She was in company," said the man, "with two *mortal* fine gentlemen, who handed her into a grand coach, in which there were some *desperate* fine ladies."

If Mr. Arnold was alarmed at receiving no intelligence, he was now almost frantic with horror and despair;—he imagined that his lovely charge had been allured or forced into the carriage;—he recollected that her mother always selected the most unfrequented walks, and that she uniformly shrank from the observations of persons of consequence;—he had remarked that she seldom strolled far from

the house, when the Ossington family were in the country:—these circumstances confirmed his own suspicions;—Anna's account of their separation was, in his mind, equivocal;—he imputed treachery to the innocent servant; and the benevolent old man was convinced that his beautiful ward had been torn by violence, or trepanned by a stratagem, from his protection. His mind was in chaotic confusion,—bewildered with the most tormenting and contending conjectures,—alternate doubts, hopes and fears assailed him;—disturbed and perplexed, he formed a thousand resolutions, and as quickly abandoned them;—at length he determined to proceed to the village, to consult with his brother (who was steward to Lord Ossington), on the necessary steps to be adopted on this melancholy catastrophe.

Mr. Arnold had almost reached the

village; when he was met by Anna, who, almost breathless, informed him, that one of the Marquis of Melrose's grooms was waiting to deliver a letter to him. The good old man redoubled his speed, and scarcely had he entered the house, when he snatched the letter from the servant's hand, and impatiently tearing it open, hastily glanced over the contents [illegible] the certainty of the dear girl's safety, his emotions overpowered him, and a tear stole down his cheek. When these joyful sensations had somewhat subsided, he perceived that he had been honoured with a note from Lord Henry Delmore. The letter concisely stated the accidental meeting, and subsequent conveyance of the interesting stranger to the castle; Lord Henry repeated the request of the Marchioness of Melrose to Mr. Arnold, that he would permit his lovely

charge to continue a few days with her daughter. The worthy old man informed Anna of her young mistress's safety; and immediately proceeded with a cheerful heart and hasty steps to Melrose Castle.

On his arrival, he was immediately ushered into the drawing-room; where he enjoyed the satisfaction of beholding the [illegible] stranger, courted and caressed by every branch of this distinguished family. The lovely girl was overwhelmed with joy to see her dear *papa Arnold*, as she was accustomed to call him: the affectionate old man could not conceal his emotions; he tenderly embraced and pressed her to his bosom, with all the fondness of an enraptured parent, on the recovery of a long-lost child. She then repeated every circumstance of her fright, and the meeting with her generous protectors; and as her heart

was violently agitated with joy and gratitude, she gave an animated description of the kindness and attention she had received.

Mr. Arnold returned his warmest and most grateful acknowledgments; and turning to his beautiful companion, "Maria my dear," said the worthy man, "as you have sufficiently recovered [illegible] fatigue and fright, take leave of your kind friends, and we will return home."

She was preparing to obey his directions; when the Marchioness expressed an ardent desire to retain the lovely girl for a few days at the Castle.

"Let me intreat you," said Lady Georgina, "to permit Miss Maria to remain; she says, that she has no companions at home; and Louisa and myself will do every thing to amuse and entertain her."

"I am convinced, Sir," rejoined her mother, "that you will not oppose our united wishes; and as we dine at Lady Ossington's on Saturday, we will then convey the sweet girl home."

The benevolent man, who observed, by Maria's countenance, that his compliance would gratify her, required no addit[illegible] for his consent; he was however convinced that his acquiescence would not be agreeable to her mother; but as her own wishes so strongly concurred with the pressing invitations of the Delmore family, he could not resist their united intreaties. After expressing his grateful thanks for the honour conferred on his charge, Mr. Arnold politely took leave of the company; and tenderly embracing Maria, proceeded with jocund heart and renovated spirits to his humble dwelling.

CHAPTER IV.

Lady Georgina was enchanted with her new acquai[illegible] forming innumerable schemes to amuse and entertain her, the sprightly girl already gleaned that Maria had lived entirely secluded with her mother;—she was imagining the delight that her lovely companion would experience in examining the rooms of the Castle, in rambling through the gardens and pleasure-grounds, and mixing with associates of her own age: and as the Marchioness had taken a box at the theatre of ———, on the night appropriated for the benefit of the Fund for

relieving the Widows and Orphans of our gallant Defenders, Lady Georgina was anticipating the pleasure which Maria would receive, the surprise she would express, and the wonder she would manifest, at the novelty of a play. This idea entirely occupied her thoughts, and she impatiently expected the period when her charming friend w[illegible] opinion, enjoy so much e[illegible]ertainment: on the following day, her expectations and conjectures were realized, as the Delmore family visited the theatre that evening.

When the Marchioness of Melrose entered the house, every eye was directed to her box: besides her own family, the party consisted of Miss Ossington, Mr. Mansell, and the lovely Maria. The theatre was crouded with persons of the first distinction in that part of the country; but

amongst the numbers attracted by a generous and laudable enthusiasm, the Delmore family shone conspicuously pre-eminent for beauty and elegance. Lady Georgina had communicated to her brother, that Maria had never witnessed a theatrical performance. Lord Henry, who was anxious to watch the effect of such an exhibition operating [illegible]ous, unsophisticated mind, placed himself near her, that he might have a full opportunity of listening to her innocent remarks, resolving her artless questions, and tracing the varying emotions depicted in her intelligent countenance, as the different passions of the human heart were unfolded and displayed by the acurate discrimination and glowing colouring of a Siddons.

The curtain had scarcely dropped, and the parties were expressing their

admiration of the incomparable actress, when the Honourable Mr. Dorville entered their box. After felicitating the Marchioness and her party on their return to the country, he expressed his delight at the accidental meeting; and declared his intention to pay his respects to the Marquis of Melrose on the following morning. The Ma[illegible]turned her acknowledgements for the intended honour.

"But the marquis," said she, "left Melrose this morning, in company with Lord Ossington, for the sheep-shearing of the Duke of Woburn; an exhibition, you know, he never fails to attend; one would almost imagine he was an ancient patriarch by attaching so much importance to the improvement of flocks and herds."

"Lord Melrose," observed Dor-

ville, "is certainly a modern Cincinnatus; he entertains so sublime an opinion of rural felicity. I verily believe, that he prefers a ploughing-match to a fashionable *déjeuné;* and experiences a gratification in the examination of cattle, superior to the ravishing amusement of an opera or masquerade."

"My father," [illegible]ord Henry, displeased with Dorville's flippant observations, "derives satisfaction from attending these exhibitions, from a decided conviction of their utility and importance. He justly considers, that every essential improvement requires the example and countenance of persons of distinction to give it currency and permanence."

Without replying to Lord Henry, the voluble Dorville, turning to the Marchioness,—"You have heard, I

presume, of the separation of Lord and Lady Wormwood? Our friend Sir Harry Hairbrain, is completely ruined. —— But who is that beautiful little girl?" observed Dorville, who, from the moment of his entering the box, had hardly withdrawn his eyes from Maria: "her face is very familiar to me."

The Marchioness replied, that she was but slightly acquainted with her.

Being unable to obtain any satisfactory information, and seeing an acquaintance in an opposite box, the restless sprig of nobility bowed and retired, to the great gratification of the Ladies, who wished to hear the enchanting overture of Lodoiska.

During the remainder of the performance, Maria charmed her companions by the novelty and vivacity of her observations; the music, the scenery, and decorations fasci-

nated her senses, and exhilarated her spirits; and the lovely maid, reluctantly, retired from this delightful entertainment.

CHAPTER V.

On the day appointed for their promised visit to Lady Ossington, Lord Arlington drove his brother and the young ladies in his barouche landau; and his mother Lady Sarah Temple proceeded in her carriage to Arley Grove. Mrs. Mansell and her son preceded the arrival of the Delmore family at Lady Ossington's.

On their entrance, they were introduced to Mr. Crosby and Mr. Charles Radcliffe.

Mr. Crosby was a gentleman of con

siderable fortune, and a justice of the peace for the county. Mr. Crosby was a keen sportsman, and a violent stickler for the game laws, which he enforced with inflexible rigour: he was a determined enemy of popular principles; and every man who dissented from his own political tenets, he considered as an enemy to the constitution. He was particularly gratified when any person listened to his political harangues with deference and attention; but though some of his parasites expressed their admiration and wonder at his profound constitutional knowledge and patriotic sentiments; his inveterate prejudices and dogmatical manner more frequently exposed him to the shafts of wit and irony. It is impossible to conceive two characters more opposite, or more strongly contrasted, than the two gentlemen who were seated in Lady

Ossington's drawing-room, when Mansell and his mother entered.

Mr. Charles Radcliffe was the eldest son of Sir William Radcliffe, and nephew to Lord Ossington. He possessed an excellent heart, the most benevolent affections, and the most liberal disposition. His generous qualities were, however, absorbed by an inordinate passion for horses: every thought, every faculty of his mind were devoted to this ruling pursuit;—and Charles Radcliffe would derive a prouder gratification, and experience a higher self-elation, by driving the finest horses, and possessing the fleetest racer; than in commanding a victorious army, in influencing a senate by his eloquence, or directing the councils of his sovereign. To gratify this ruling passion, he had dissipated enormous sums; the liberal allowance of an indulgent

father was inadequate to supply his extravagance.

Sir William's generosity was almost exhausted, — and Charles Radcliffe had lately incurred his displeasure by losing several thousand pounds, at the last Newmarket meeting. He therefore retired to his uncle's seat, to retrench his expenditure. His father's indignation did not however depress his gaiety, nor restrain him from the limited indulgence of his favourite passion. Politics or business never occupied his attention; he was only desirous to see his country powerful and flourishing; and if he was only permitted to enjoy his stud of valuable horses, and attend every sporting meeting, he was indifferent what minister ruled the country, or whether the son of the illustrious Chatham was succeeded by that consummate statesman, the uniform and

constant opposer of his administration and principles. Radcliffe, who entertained an invincible dislike to the manners and conversation of Mr. Crosby, and always seized the first occasion to escape from his society, observed to Mansell, "Will you take a lounge, Sir, before dinner, and look at my new horses?"

Lord Arlington had just entered the ring, when he was accosted by Charles Radcliffe and Mansell, who were sauntering on the lawn. —"You have four devilish nice tits there, my Lord," said Radcliffe; "I think, they shew more blood, and are grander figures in harness than my greys, that I bought of Lord Dashall."

While Radcliffe was viewing the barouche, expatiating on the blood and symmetry of the horses, and asking a thousand questions of his noble friend, on the only subject that

interested him, Mansell was chatting with the young ladies;—and before Radcliffe had completed his examination, or had finished expressing his admiration, Lord Arlington and his party proceeded to the house.

The elegant mansion of Lord Ossington had been recently erected, under the superintendance and direction of that ingenious Architect Mr. Wyatt; who had formed it on the model of an Italian Villa. The pleasure-grounds were laid out and disposed with the greatest taste. The approach to Arley Grove, was by a fine road delightfully shaded by lofty elm and stately chesnut trees; as you advanced nearer, you passed through a beautiful shrubbery interspersed with the most odoriferous flowers; the entrance to the house was by an elegant portico, the pillars of which

were entwined with jessamine, rose trees, and woodbines.

The interior decorations corresponded with the elegance of the structure, and the beauty of the grounds; the graceful lightness of modern embellishment was combined with the ponderous magnificence of ancient ornaments.

The company were scarcely assembled, when Lady Georgina Delmore requested permission to shew Maria, Miss Ossington's aviary; and receiving a tacit acquiescence, she gaily tripped out of the room with her cousin Louisa and her young friend. Miss Ossington, who was greatly prepossessed by Maria's interesting appearance, availed herself of this opportunity to gratify her curiosity in regard to her name and family. Lord Henry Delmore gave an animated and glowing description of his accidental

meeting with the fair stranger, and declared that there was something in her manners and appearance so bewitching, that he was irresistibly interested in her destiny.

"I must confess," observed Mr. Crosby, "that in my opinion, persons of rank and fashion demean themselves, by the introduction of people of an inferior condition into their houses to associate with their children. When these vulgar characters obtain a footing in the house of a person of distinction, they immediately aspire to an equality with their benefactors; and as such, an *élève* possesses every opportunity to observe the manners and conduct of his superiors; their graceful levities and elegant pursuits are condemned as frivolous or vicious; and the refined luxury of their domestic establishments is denounced as wasteful and

criminal profusion. I have ever considered these unnatural attempts to exalt the vulgar above their own level extremely absurd and detrimental; and I conceive, that social order has been greatly disturbed, and that the lower classes of the community have, by the general diffusion of learning, abated some portion of that implicit deference, which they formerly paid to their superiors; and have presumed to offer respect only to those characters who, in their wise opinions, deserve it."

"Nothing can be more preposterous," remarked Miss Emma Ossington, "than a lady of birth and distinction countenancing an acquaintance between their families and such low people: unless indeed she wishes the affections of her husband to be alienated; or her son to be ruined by

a disgraceful marriage with her artful *protégée.*"

"The introduction of a young person into a noble family, against which Mr. Crosby so vehemently inveighs," observed Lord Henry Delmore, "can only produce those pernicious consequences, when caprice, instead of merit, governs us in the selection of the object. The budding virtues of the child of adversity, nipped by the chilling air of penury, may expand and fructify by the genial warmth of favour and encouragement. And surely those liberal and exalted minds deserve our highest commendation, who extend such generous patronage and disinterested support."

"I acknowledge," said the Marchioness of Melrose, "that if I could overcome my abhorence of the introduction of any stranger into my fa-

mily, I should be induced to depart from my decided resolution in favour of Maria, and to adopt her, in compliance with Georgina's wishes. She possesses an indesctibable fascination; such a lovely countenance; so sweet a disposition; such astonishing intelligence for so young a creature; and altogether, so highly accomplished for a child of her years."

"The generosity of your sentiments affects me," replied Lord Henry Delmore: "I am confident that your liberal and benevolent heart will induce you to gratify the wishes of Georgina and myself, by watching over the destiny of the lovely innocent.—My father," gaily remarked Lord Henry, "will be little exposed to her captivating powers; and as for my brother and myself,"—(looking significantly at Lord Arlington and Miss Ossington,)—"our hearts

are invulnerable to her enchantments."

"You protest nobly, my Lord," said Mansell; "but I suspect, that in a few years you may, perhaps, not possess a talisman to guard you from the magic of Maria's charms."

As dinner was announced, the Honourable Mr. Dorville entered. — Mr. Dorville was the eldest son of Lord Harefield. He was a gay, volatile, good-tempered young man, whose rank entitled him to mix in the highest class of society; and whose urbanity and liveliness rendered him an agreeable visitor: in a word, he was one of those well-dressed flutterers of distinction, who serve to crowd the parties of a lady of fashion, and to swell the list of her ennobled friends in the columns of a newspaper. His family were visiting acquaintances of Lady Ossington; and as Mr. Dorville had

intimated to Miss Osssington at the theatre, his intention of continuing some time in the country; she particularly pressed him to join their party, on the day that the Delmore family visited Arley Grove.

A more important motive, than the desire of amusement, impelled Dorville to participate in the festivity. He was particularly anxious to make some additional enquiries concerning Maria; and placing himself next to her at dinner, he almost overwhelmed the artless girl with unceasing questions.

"Has the little rustic thrown her spells round you also,"—exclaimed Miss Emma Ossington,—"you appear so warmly interested in her situation?"

"I certainly," replied Dorville, "am highly delighted with my lovely companion; but the engaging man-

ners of a child, or indeed the highest female attraction, can possess little influence, when opposed to the brighter fascinations of Miss Emma Ossington!"

As Dorville correctly interpreted Miss Emma's hint, he transferred his attentions, and assiduously exerted every effort to entertain her: and as she was alternately flattered and addressed by him and Lord Henry Delmore, her usual asperity softened into good-humour: and as Mr. Crosby was pleased with the excellence of the venison, and the exquisite flavour of some fine madeira; the whole party gave a loose to mirth and hilarity.

When the ladies had retired, and the youthful party freed from restraint; good-humour and sprightliness circulated rapidly. — Radcliffe, exhilarated by the bewitching smiles

of burgundy, amused the company with his eccentricities, and convulsed them with laughter, by ironically supporting the opinions, or by openly ridiculing the prejudices and formal manners, of Mr. Crosby.

The expensive and profuse entertainment lately given by the mayor of ———, became the theme of conversation; and as Mr. Crosby was a complete voluptuary in the enjoyments of the table, he was expatiating on the wines and viands with epicurean delight, and culinary discrimination.

"For my own part," said Radcliffe, who seized with avidity every occasion to mortify and plague him, "I never was so heartily disgusted.—such vulgarity, profusion, and dulness;—such gluttony and rudeness;—such scrambling for dainties;—that I almost imagined myself at a

feast of the *Cherokees*, or *Mohawks*. One brutal fellow observing me to separate some venison from the sweet sauce, exclaimed—'I perceive, Sir, 'you don't like fat;' and instantly sticking his fork into it, conveyed the precious morsel to his own plate."

"I have received," said Mr. Crosby, with his usual formal and pompous manner, "intelligence that has surprised and alarmed me. The petitions of the Catholics of Ireland have been favourably received by government, and their requests will probably be granted. Rather than extend to them the privileges of Protestants, I would recommend the ministers to punish every dissatisfied person."

"Certainly!" remarked Mansell ironically, "I agree with Mr. Crosby, that the extermination of some of

these persons would be a striking example of justice and wisdom!"

"A system of conciliation," observed Delmore, "must produce the happiest effects in allaying the animosities, and soothing the irritation of the people of Ireland. In religious controversies, coercion can only inflame and confirm dissatisfaction. We must indeed carry on an internecionary warfare to cut off every discontented person in a country, where a considerable majority of its inhabitants *conceive* themselves deprived of several immunities and privileges, on account of their speculative opinions on matters of religious faith. The wise and temperate will however suspend every difference of opinion, until the present arduous struggle is terminated; and every heart and hand will, I hope, be united to repel the invaders of their country.

It is the essence of freedom and inseparable from a free government, for men to differ on speculative points.— The best and wisest men of this country differed on the effect and consequences of the French Revolution. Those, who considered that Revolution as a monster of hell vomiting discord and massacres,—whose pestiferous breath polluted and envenomed every person within its noxious influence,—imagined that an iron barrier could alone oppose its devouring progress. Others considered that the most fallacious illusions acquired importance, when the introduction of opinions was opposed by violence and authority; they conceived that the superior blessings of Englishmen, would induce them to value the real advantages of their own constitution, and to resist fantastic innovations. The French, if not as-

sailed by exterior force, occupied with their own internal dissensions, would be incapacitated from disturbing the peace, or invading the nations of Europe; but if the embodied phalanx of Europe combined against the republic, they might derive supernatural strength, from the convulsive struggles of despair; the united energies and resources of a revolutionary government might be called into action; and the civilized world might crouch beneath the iron sceptre of military despotism."

Radcliffe, who always dreaded Mr. Crosby's soporiferous harangues, and justly considered politics as the bane of conviviality, perceiving that his countenance was flushed with indignation at Lord Henry's observations, prevented his reply, by asking Lord Arlington, if he was inclined to dispose of his barouche horses? and turn-

ing to Mr. Crosby he banteringly said: "I'll bet you seven to four, my Dungannon colt beats Sir Frank Boville's filley, by Waxey, at the next races at Melrose."

As Radcliffe had fortunately fixed on the only subject, with the exception of politics, that particularly interested Mr. Crosby, he succeeded in dispelling the clouds of disapprobation that were lowering on his brow. They immediately entered into a prolix dissertation on the respective merits of their dogs and horses: universal good-humour was re-assumed; and the gentlemen re-assembled, with renovated spirits and increased vivacity, in Lady Ossington's drawing-room.

On their entrance, Lady Georgina flew to Lord Henry Delmore.—"Oh! Brother," said the enraptured girl, "Mamma has been so kind as to in-

vite Maria to remain with me some time longer; and Mr. Arnold has granted his permission. I am in such high spirits, for Maria will be so delighted with the entertainments and amusements at the Castle!"—

The remainder of the day was spent with general hilarity and universal good-humour: — the enlivening influence of burgundy gave additional zest and spirit to the wit of the gentlemen; — and the parties separated at a late hour, satisfied with themselves; and gratified by the liberal hospitality and polished affability of their noble hostess.

Mr. Dorville had retired early in the evening; — his eager curiosity prompting him to make the most minute enquiries concerning Maria, he seized this opportunity of calling on Mr. Arnold.

The worthy old man received his

distinguished visitor with the greatest respect and complacency. He was however greatly surprised and perplexed by his appearance; and waited with impatient expectation to learn the cause and object of this interview.

Mr. Dorville apologized for the liberty he had taken; but as he was particularly and deeply interested in the destiny of the young Lady who was, at present, on a visit at Melrose Castle, he requested Mr. Arnold's indulgence, if he presumed to enquire some particulars concerning her family and connexions.

Mr. Arnold could indeed have afforded but little information, even if he had been disposed to communicate every circumstance within his own knowledge.—Maria's mother had studiously abstained from any mention of her connexions;—she had parti

cularly intreated, that her daughter should live in complete seclusion during her absence; — and the maid had been enjoined never to carry her to the town of ——: and though Mr. Arnold had violated her injunctions, by permitting his young charge to continue at the Castle for a few days, he had reluctantly complied, as the request proceeded from persons of such influence and distinction.

He had been solicited to extend the period of her stay at the Castle; and a visit on the *same evening* from a gentleman of Dorville's appearance, who obviously interested himself so strongly, and was so anxiously inquisitive concerning her, excited considerable suspicion and alarm in the mind of Mr. Arnold. He therefore drily answered to Dorville's interrogatories by merely declaring the name of Maria's mother.

Dorville immediately pressed him with a mutitude of questions: how long had they resided at his house?—by whom were they recommended?—how long did they purpose to continue?—And the reluctant hesitation of the old man served only to quicken the eagerness, and increase the number of his enquiries.

Mr. Arnold confined his replies to the simple information, that Maria's mother had resided in his house about two years; that she had lately been constrained to visit some relations;—and that she was hourly expected to return.

Perceiving that Mr. Arnold was unable, or unwilling to satisfy his anxious curiosity, Dorville threw himself into his carriage, disappointed, perplexed, and mortified.

His anxiety to discover her family, the tenderness and interest which he

manifested for this engaging child, originated from the revival of an afflicting and melancholy occurrence.—A sister of Dorville, a beautiful child of four years of age, had disappeared in a most extraordinary manner. The maid, to whose care she was entrusted, had called on her mother, who lived in the village contiguous to Lord Harefield's house. Whilst the girl stepped into the cottage, the child was left playing in the garden; when she returned, the infant had vanished;—and whether she had fallen into the river, that ran at the bottom of the garden; whether she was enticed by the mendicant gypseys, that infested that neighbourhood, who stripped, and, perhaps, afterwards murdered her; or by what means she disappeared, had never been ascertained.

The sight of Maria, whose age corresponded so exactly to that of this

long-lost innocent, and her striking resemblance to his other sister, revived the recollection of this distressing accident; her interesting appearance irresistibly excited the tenderest emotions, and even transiently lighted up the brightest hopes.

From the moment Mr. Dorville had a glimpse of her countenance at the theatre, he never withdrew his eyes during the whole evening. The Marchioness of Melrose had been since persecuted with his enquiries;—she informed him that Maria was uncommonly well educated;—that her knowledge and accomplishments were truly astonishing for a girl of her condition; Lady Georgina officiously mentioned, that her young friend could speak the French language; and that she played extremely well on the piano-forte. He had learned from the artless maid, that she was solely instructed by her

mother;—he collected from her answers, that she lived intirely secluded at Mr. Arnold's;—and that her mother never associated with any persons of the vicinity.

Dorville had flattered himself with obtaining every necessary information from Mr. Arnold; he hoped to have found the clue to guide him in his enquiries; but, instead of disentangling his perplexities, Mr. Arnold's equivocal answers and unsatisfactory replies, concurring with the absence of her mother, involved him in a labyrinth of doubts.

Bewildered and chagrined, his mind was distracted by the most painful rumination, and during the whole of his journey, he was devising innumerable schemes and expedients to penetrate this mystery.

CHAPTER VI.

THE town of ——— was crowded with company;—every house was completely occupied;—and Melrose Castle was filled with persons of the highest distinction. Invitations were dispatched by the Marchioness of Melrose to every one within the extensive circle of her acquaintance; and it had been circulated by her authority, and was generally understood, that every person of genteel appearance and respectable condition, would be a welcome visitor at this festival.

The Marquis was resolved to celebrate the birth-day of his son with a

magnificence worthy the descendant of so illustrious a house; and as Lord Arlington came into possession of a considerable fortune bequeathed by his uncle, every motive of pride, interest, and ambition, conspired to render his arrival at twenty-one a source of joy and exultation.

In superaddition to these powerful inducements, the aproaching election considerably operated on the mind of the Marquis, in producing this magnificent display and enormous expence;—he was desirous to augment and consolidate his influence in the borough of ———; and he seems justly conceived, that nothing could so effectually increase his own importance, or so completely gratify the inhabitants, as a participation in the liberal hospitality and successive amusements, with which he intended to entertain his distinguished visitors.

The Castle had undergone a thorough repair; every exertion had been directed to render the apartments commodious and elegant; the most ingenious artists had employed their talents to adorn and decorate the interior; and the splendid furniture was selected by the refined taste of the Marchioness.

Melrose Castle had originally been erected about the time of Edward the Third, by an ancestor of the present owner: it had been demolished by fire; and the present magnificent structure was rebuilt, in the reign of Queen Anne, by his great-grandfather George Marquis of Melrose.

This beautiful edifice had been greatly modernized and improved by the present Lord; and it was universally allowed to equal, in situation

and grandeur, the residence of any nobleman in this country.

The house was situated on an eminence in a spacious park; the front commanded an extensive prospect over the surrounding country: a beautiful river meandered through the grounds, which, after passing between tremendous rocks, now flowed through a delightful valley: the banks of the stream were adorned with the finest trees; the most enchanting walks were formed along the rocks; where the eye was occasionally gratified by a picturesque view of the water and the circumjacent country; while the intervening foliage, at other times, obscured the prospect, and by its sombre influence served to contrast and heighten the beauty of the landscape. Nature was here displayed in all her wild luxuriance; she had been lavish in her bounties to the place; and her match-

less graces and inimitable sublimity had not been disfigured or destroyed by the innovating hands of modern improvement.

The Marquis of Melrose, had an invincible distaste to that mode of disposing of the grounds, (unfortunately then but too prevalent in this country,) where nature is distorted by a perpetual sameness; where a dull uniformity usurps the place of varying prospects and diversified views; where serpentine walks, formal plantations, and regular cut parterres, present themselves in tedious succession; and the eye fatigued, wanders over a perpetual

"————— Scene
Of red-hot gravel, fring'd with tawdry green."

The approach was over a beautiful bridge; and the road, winding round the hill, facilitated the access to the house.

The perpetual succession of elegant carriages, horsemen, the varied liveries of their servants, passing over the bridge, and winding round the road, as they hurried to the Castle, formed an agreeable and perpetually moving scene; and had greatly entertained the young people for several successive days.

THE bells of ——— gave early intelligence of the long-expected day,—every body was in motion,—every countenance beamed with joy and vivacity,—and pleasure revelled in every heart;—every person crouded to express their congratulations to Lord Arlington;—all were eager to testify their affection and veneration for this illustrious house. The Marquis of Melrose was lord lieutenant of the county: the militia, stationed in the adjacent town, were reviewed in the

park; and a sham fight was exhibited for the amusement of the company.

After the military manœuvres had ceased, the officers were invited to partake, with the visitors, of an elegant *déjeune;* and the soldiers and the inferior people were regaled in the park.

The company amused themselves, till dinner, by sailing on the water; in riding round the extensive grounds; or rambling through the beautiful woods that adorned the domain.

In the elegant and spacious rooms of the Castle, five hundred persons sat down to a magnificent banquet; a temporary room was erected; and several marquees pitched, to entertain the tenants and most of the tradesmen of ———; whilst an ox and two sheep were roasted, to feast the neighbouring peasantry.

During the banquet, the band play-

ed the most favourite pieces of martial music; concealed musicians occasionally breathed, from silver-toned flutes, the softest melody.

Bonfires and fire-works were displayed for the amusement of the peasantry; while a brilliant ball closed a day of general joy and unintermitting pleasure.

The following day was marked by a continual succession of varying entertainments.

A race-course had been marked out in the Park, and so contrived (as the house stood on an eminence), that the company could, whilst they walked on the beautiful lawn in front of the Castle, command a complete view of the horses.

A plate of one hundred guineas given by Lord Arlington, was run for by horses belonging to the gentlemen of the county.

The Hunters' Stakes then succeeded; — the horses were ridden by some of the visitors at the Castle.

As these races afforded excellent sport, the company were highly delighted; and the little Maria, who had never witnessed such scenes of mirth and festivity, was intoxicated with pleasure.

Radcliffe, who had, contrary to universal expectation, won his match, had no sooner reached the winning-post, than he dismounted, and ran up the lawn, enquiring, with breathless eagerness, for Mr. Crosby; as, in his own phrase, "he wanted to touch the old don for five hundred."

Mr. Crosby, who justly considered his horse superior in fleetness to Radcliffe's, had artfully made a considerable bet with the thoughtless young sportsman: but, either through the unskilfulness of the rider, or from

restiveness, he had bolted out of the course, and lost the race.— —Pluming himself on his superior sagacity, and hugging himself in imaginary security, the mortification and disappointment operated with redoubled violence, from the anticipated certainty of success.

Radcliffe, who delighted in tormenting Mr. Crosby, and who was never better pleased than when he augmented his uneasiness, was imagining to himself the reception that he would receive when he demanded his bet.

Looking significantly at Lord Arlington and some of his sporting friends, he bantered Mr. Crosby on his loss; and the party were almost provoked to laughter at the malicious industry that Radcliffe displayed to irritate and ridicule the morose and disappointed justice.

Mr. Crosby, who had lost a con-

siderable sum on the race, was endeavouring to console himself for his disappointment by asserting, that his horse was entitled to win, and explaining the mode in which he ought to have been ridden, and pointing out the causes that had occasioned him to bolt out of the course.

Perceiving young Wilson, who rode Mr. Crosby's horse, coming up the lawn,

"Wilson," said Radcliffe; "Mr. Crosby says, that his horse lost the race through your bad riding."

Wilson, who was extremely vain of his horsemanship, proceeded to Crosby to demand an explanation; while Radcliffe was enjoying the confusion and perplexity of Crosby.

A silver badge was afterwards rowed for by four watermen belonging to the Marquis of Melrose.

During the race, several boats, filled

with musicians playing the most beautiful airs, passed along the river; and several bands of Savoyards were stationed in different parts of the woods contiguous to the water; whose melodious notes occasionally dying away, and sometimes striking on the ear, as the performers advanced or receded, produced a most agreeable and almost enchanting effect.

A prodigious multitude of the peasantry and weavers of ——, were liberally regaled with roast beef; and barrels of ale, brewed at Lord Arlington's birth, enlivened the children of industry; who, forgetting their cares and toils, indulged in harmless frolic and rustic merriment.

In the evening, the house and grounds were illuminated;—the trees near the road were hung with coloured lamps;—the bridge displayed the dazzling brilliancy of innumerable

lamps and torches;—fireworks were occasionally discharged:—and as those who had cards of invitation for the masked ball proceeded to the Castle, their carriages appeared to be envelop- ed in a blaze of light.

The spacious ball-room had been considerably enlarged, to accommodate the immense numbers who joined the visitors at the Castle.

The ceiling was adorned with the most exquisite painting; from which several grecian lamps of bronze and gold were suspended: vases of similar materials were supported on marble pillars; the walls were decorated with rose, geranium, and jessamin trees, interspersed with variegated lamps, shedding a dazzling lustre, and giving an indeseribable brilliancy to the scene.

The entrance to this superb apartment was by several marble steps;—a

venetian canopy and lattice-work that overshadowed them, was hung with a profusion of lamps, and entwined with wood-bines and the most odoriferous shrubs. A number of the principal instrumental performers were engaged; the enlivening music of the Gows, lent its animating aid to the dancers: and as the windows opened into the lawn, if the heat of the room induced any of the company to court the refreshing breeze, a military band gratified them with the most favourite martial airs; while repeated discharges of fire-works, bonfires, and the shouts of the peasants, served to give additional spirit to the exhilarating festival.

The motley groupe assembled early; and the room resounded with frolic, eccentricity and merriment;—sprightliness and good-humour were eminently conspicuous; joy sparkled in every

eye;—dull restraint was banished; —the goddess of Pleasure fixed her abode in her favourite temple;—the walls re-echoed with mirth and laughter; and wit and gaiety reigned with triumphant sway.

Radcliffe, who was dressed as a country bumpkin, was amusing the company with his awkward gait, rustic dialect, and humourous conceits. Seeing Lord Henry Delmore, whom he recognised dressed as a counsellor, he said:

"Ize wants to ax your honor's ad-"vice."—

"I never give my opinion without "a fee;" replied the counsellor, gravely stretching out his hand.

"Why zounds, I've herd, that a "poor man can have counsellors for "nothing."

"Certainly if you mean to sue *in*

"*formâ pauperis*;" rejoined the man of law.

"In form of a who!" said the rustic.

"If you mean to avail yourself of "your poverty," said the counsellor, "propound your question!"

"Why, you must know as how, "your honor, that a hog of Farmer "Acid's come into my gearden, and "yeat a great mony cabbages;—now, "as I warned him off, and he come "a second time, why, do you zee, I "knows as how he has meade a tres-"pass; and I wants to know wether "I must go to law against the hog "or the measter?"

"Your action will unquestionably "lie against the master," observed the counsellor; "and as you state the "trespass to be wilful and malicious, "you will receive heavy damages.—I "succeeded last assizes in obtaining a

"verdict for a man whose garden "had been injured by the pigs of a "neighbouring cottager: we ruined "the rascal, and obliged him to leave "his country."

"Why yes," replied the countryman, "and I zuppoze the conkeror "was sent to jail for the law charge."

The company were now attracted by Lord Arlington, Mansell, and Miss Ossington, dressed as wandering minstrels, accompanied by three lovely girls. — They performed several beautiful airs with exquisite taste and brilliant execution. A circle was then formed, and Lady Georgina Delmore, Louisa Temple, and Maria danced several reels, with a grace and elegance that fascinated every spectator, while the attendant minstrels lent their musical assistance.

It was now buzzed about the room, that there was a most extraordinary

man dressed as a fortune-teller; and, as many who had crossed his hand, knew that he had given a just and accurate description of their own characters, they were anxious to hear his remarks and animadversions on others. Every one was hastening to the spot, emulous to listen to his predictions.

Mr. Rainsford, the assumed fortune-teller, was an officer of rank, who formerly shone in the most distinguished circles of fashion. He now spent the greater part of the year at his elegant seat near ——— ; but as he occasionally visited town, by mixing with persons of consequence, he was intimately acquainted with the characters, sentiments, and pursuits of most of the company. — Addicted in early life to gaming, he had been stripped, in a state of intoxication, of an enormous sum by a titled sharper. As the whole of the trans-

action was extremely equivocal, Mr. Rainsford contracted such an abhorrence of dissipation and play, that he immediately retired from town. A life of seclusion had not, however, extinguished those generous sentiments and benevolent affections that characterized his youth; though he had contracted an asperity of remark and sarcastic bitterness of expression, when he beheld the possessors of rank and fortune divert those splendid ornaments merely to cover their vices and licentiousness.

Miss Emma Ossington, tripping as a flower-girl, pertly demanded him to tell her fortune.

"The veil of innocence, simplicity, "and purity," he replied, "ill conceals "the pride, frivolity, and folly of "the wearer. A heart devoted to "luxury and dissipation,—selfish and "unfeeling, — pursuing its own gra-

"tification without regarding the "peace and happiness of others,— "can neither feel the force of vir- "tuous sentiments, cannot be re- "claimed by the precepts of wisdom, "nor reformed by the admonitions of "experience. A giddy, dissipated, "restless being,—a gaudy, painted "insect, who, after its ephemeral "fluttering, will terminate its career "in contempt, neglect, and disap- "pointment. A vain, unfeeling co- "quette, whose heart, insensible to "the delicacy and refinement of an "elegant passion, will yield to the "addresses of the first noble profli- "gate that assails it, and whose for- "tune will become a prey to some "titled gamester, or ruined man of "fashion."

Mr. Crosby, who appeared in the dignity and paraphernalia of a judge, next addressed him.

"It is perfectly natural," observed the venerable man, "that the person, who "absurdly and undeservedly expects "to acquire the reputation of wisdom "and virtue, should now assume a "character that he is unable to sup-"port. Ignorance and folly will ever "endeavour to obtain a borrowed im-"portance from extrinsic circum-"stances. A contracted understand-"ing, slender acquirements, and ob-"tuse feelings engender vulgar, un-"elevated sentiments and confined "views. Such limited faculties are "restricted to the contemplation of "a single part; and cannot embrace "any enlarged or comprehensive sys-"tem. — But, should such an unen-"larged mind, instead of perceiving "its own insufficiency and unfitness, "presume dogmatically to enforce its "own crude, undigested notions, or "attempt to enlist superior intellects

"to the standard of its own preju-
"dices; though parasites and depen-
"dents may support, and even affect
"to applaud, such abortive opinions;
"the liberal and enlightened will
"consign them to merited contempt
"and ridicule."

Lady Georgina Delmore, who had been exercising her ingenuity, and torturing her imagination relative to Maria, now led her young friend to the oracle; when, the artless girl mentioning her name,

"Sweet, budding innocent!" said the old man, "your pure, unadulte-
"rated mind, your guileless heart,
"and unsophisticated sentiments, pre-
"sent an agreeable contrast to the
"unfeeling apathy, the affected man-
"ners, and unblushing dissoluteness
"of maturer life. Yet, lovely, in-
"teresting maid! to what dangers
"are you exposed, what perils must

"you encounter! tremble while you "tread the slippery ground, and wan- "der through the mazy labyrinth of "fashionable life! Unshielded by for- "tune, unsecured by the magic circle "of rank, your susceptible bosom "will be too frequently wounded by "the coarse observations of the un- "reflecting or unfeeling; your sensi- "bility will be agonized by the sar- "castic remarks, and malicious in- "sinuations of scandal; and you "may, perhaps, be constrained to "listen to the most debasing propo- "sals, or insulted by the licentious "addresses of a titled profligate! "Preserve then that unaffected sim- "plicity; — cherish those virtuous "sentiments; — guard your heart "from the contagious seduction of "dissipation and voluptuousness: — "you may then escape the snares and "temptations of licentious love; —

"you will enjoy an uninterrupted "gaiety of heart, unruffled by tor- "menting passions, — and secure a "perpetual serenity of mind, undis- "turbed by the distractions of liber- "tinism and vice."

Miss Emma Ossington, overpowered by the heat, and mortified by the observations of the old man, had withdrawn from the room, followed by Lord Dashall. He had long been a suitor of Emma Ossington, and if her heart was susceptible of any tender emotion, she felt, or at least she thought she entertained an ardent affection for that nobleman. His pursuits and sentiments had endeared him to her; an unbounded love of pleasure, — an unlimited indulgence in all the excesses and enjoyments of fashionable life, — a profound contempt and disregard for every employment that required abilities or re-

fiection,—first attracted her notice, and afterwards captivated her affections. With him she could pursue an unceasing career of luxury and profusion;—she could then indulge her unbridled propensity for expensive entertainments and crowded parties;—with him, she could revel in every voluptuous delight:—and Emma Ossington's imagination had rendered her a willing captive, before he even attempted to subjugate her heart.

Dashall had formerly been extremely remiss in his attentions;—he did not even avow himself a serious admirer: but his fortune being considerably impaired by some heavy losses at play, by an extensive stud of race-horses, and a run of ill luck at the last October meeting at Newmarket, he had assiduously pursued her during her residence in town last winter, and they had since continued a regular epistolarly correspondence. As his father

had been a trustee under the will of the late Mr. Ossington, he knew that Emma Ossington, exclusive of her dependence on her father, was entitled to an immense property bequeathed by her uncle.

This circumstance induced him to redouble his amorous attentions, as he hoped by her opulence to repair his shattered fortune. He had obtained her consent to propose the marriage to Lord Ossington; but as Dashall was so overwhelmed with debts, that his estates were in the hands of trustees, he was incapacitated to make any settlement, and he was convinced that her father, on being acquainted with the embarrassed condition of his affairs, would inevitably oppose their union. Dashall, rapturously thanked her for her kind prepossession in his favour, and declared that he would immediately break the affair to Lord Ossington;

as soon as he had consulted his uncle, from whom he had considerable expectations.

Impressed with a conviction of the impossibility to succeed by an application to the father, the interested *inamorato* exerted every endeavour to increase his power over her mind,—he hoped to engage her affections so completely,—to secure himself so strong an interest in her heart,—that she would joyfully consent to a private marriage.

The invitation to the present festival luckily coincided with his views; and as Melrose was so contiguous to Arley Grove, Lord Dashall arrived at the Castle two days before the commencement of the fête, that he might avail himself of the opportunity of renewing his attentions to his mistress. He informed her that he had secured his uncle's sanction to the intended union; and that he should, at the ter

mination of the present fête, endeavour to obtain the consent of her father.

From the first moment of her arrival at Melrose, Dashall had followed her with the most engaging solicitude and endearing attentions;—he danced with her during the whole of the preceding evening; and Emma Ossington viewed, in him, the lord of her affections, to whom she would speedily and indissolubly be united.

Such were her sentiments and feelings, when Lord Dashall followed her from the room.—He artfully commenced his address by expatiating on the felicity which he anticipated from the approaching nuptials;—he rapturously dilated on the enchanting and unfading delights that he should enjoy with his lovely Emma, the idol of his soul,—the mistress of his affections,—the object of his warmest wishes!—he then tenderly lamented, that cold

delays, and the frigid feelings of parents and relations, should protract the happiness, and impede the bliss of two fond hearts: and when the enamoured girl, yielding to the solicitations and ardour of her lover, seemed to repine at such intervention; he boldly proposed and warmly recommended an immediate elopement.

She observed, that though she would frankly confess their union was the dearest wish of her heart; yet there could be no occasion for this precipitate proceeding:—as he had secured his uncle's consent, no doubt could be entertained of Lord Ossington's approbation. Besides — —

The noble lord pressed her to his bosom in the fondest manner, interrupting her remarks, and passionately exclaiming, that if she loved him with an affection as ardent as glowed in his own bosom, she would not refuse to

accompany him this moment to the land of Liberty and Love;—perhaps his uncle might retract;—perhaps Lord Ossington might have other views;—old men were often capricious,—and frequently pertinacious:—he hated the formal ceremony of a regular marriage:—what éclat would such an elopement give her as a woman of spirit!—his fortune was more than sufficient to supply their utmost wishes.—

"Haste! haste, my Emma!" said Dashall; "lose not the precious moments, but let us fly from dull restraint to love and happiness!"

Overpowered by the vehemence of his addresses,—dissolved with tenderness,—inflamed with passion,—heated with wine,—and melted with music, the fascinated girl suffered him to lead, or rather carry her into the park.

At the appointed place, Mathewson met his master, and conducted him to

the spot, where, in a retired corner of the park, stood his lordship's travelling-chaise and four.

As Dashall had resolved to make his meditated attack on the night of the masquerade, he had commissioned Mathewson to arrange the position of the carriage, to procure some necessary apparel for his mistress, and to obtain the key of that gate in the park which opened on an unfrequented road.

During the secession of the noble inamorato and his mistress, the mirth and vivacity of the company were unabated; — the characters were supported with unusual spirit; — jest, frolic, and playfulness, were everywhere displayed. — The old fortune-teller excited considerable interest and curiosity; and the sprightly party were again enlivened by some beautiful airs of the minstrels, and by the

bewitching attitudes and elegant motions of the attendant graces.—Radcliffe was still amusing the company with his eccentric whims and vivacious humour.

The mayor of ———, habited as a *charlatan*, was descanting with tedious prolixity on the various virtues and efficacious qualities of his medicines. — "One nostrum," he observed, "would re-animate the most decayed constitution, renovate the "most debilitated, — inspire the most "languid, — and assuage the anguish "of pain, by instantly lulling the patient to repose."

"There can be no occasion," remarked a sprightly domino, "for "your composing medicine, when "your harangue will operate as a "more certain and powerful soporific."

All was noise and confusion at the

upper end of the room;—a formal methodist had been warning a young sailor, who was manifesting very tender regards to a lovely fruit-girl, not to be tempted by an agent of Satan; when the young tar, not relishing his interference, and being somewhat elevated by wine, conceived that the pretended religionist wished to rival him in the affections of the handmaid of Pomona, and was proceeding to treat him with some degree of roughness. A leaden-heeled harlequin, in endeavouring to leap over the back of a pantaloon, that he might learn the occasion of this disturbance, stumbled and fell against a very luxuriant rose-tree; the ground was quickly strewed with glittering fragments of lamps, and the particoloured hero, drenched with oil, retired overwhelmed with shame and vexation.

The magnificent apartments of the Castle were now thrown open; and supper being announced, the motley groupe immediately busied themselves in collecting their particular friends, and forming their respective parties.

A sumptuous entertainment, composed of every delicacy that the season could produce, — the choicest fruits, and most delicious wines, evinced the liberal hospitality of their noble host. Mirth and pleasure irradiated every countenance, — good-humour circulated with easy frankness and polished freedom,—and wit, inspirited by mantling champagne and enlivening burgundy, flashed with redoubled brilliancy. The festive party returned to the ball-room with renovated spirits and increased animation; and the exhilarated band continued their sportive revelry with additional vivacity.

The orient sun had gilded the mountains' tops, ere the whole of those who had joined the distinguished guests at the Castle had departed.

During the time of supper, Miss Ossington, who had been slightly indisposed the preceding day, fatigued by her uncommon exertions to overcome the languor of sickness, and appear animated and vivacious on the birth-day of the idol of her affections; and, overpowered by the excessive heat, fainted, and was carried out of the room senseless. Lord Arlington, who beheld her illness with the liveliest concern and most affectionate solicitude, impatiently returned to inform her sister: he passed through every room: as he knew her dress, and the ladies were unmasked, he was indeed surprised at being unable to discover her: he imagined however that the anxiety and alarm which he ex-

perienced for his mistress, might have occasioned him to overlook her: and seeing Charles Radcliffe, he informed him of his cousin's indisposition; desiring him to find Miss Emma Ossington.

Radcliffe hurried through the supper-rooms, and, rejoining Lord Arlington, eagerly declared, that he could not find his cousin: that he had enquired in every apartment, but could hear no tidings of her. Lord Arlington then desired Radcliffe to inform his aunt (who had retired with Miss Ossington) of their ill-success.

Lady Ossington imagined that her daughter might have been attacked by indisposition; and that feeling herself unable to support the exertion of the entertainment, and being unwilling to interrupt the enjoyment, or disturb the amusement of her sister, she had retired unobserved from the

festive scene. She immediately sent for Miss Emma Ossington's maid.

On the appearance of the servant, Lady Ossington eagerly asked if her mistress was indisposed, as she had retired so early: the girl replied, that she had not seen Miss Emma during the night.

Lady Ossington instantly dispatched her to her daughter's room. The servant quickly returned with the intelligence that her mistress was not in her chamber.

Lady Ossington then desired Radcliffe to request his uncle's presence immediately. Lord Ossington was instantaneously acquainted with the disappearance of his daughter: he rang the bell for his man, and desired him to enquire among the different servants of the Castle, if any person had lately seen Miss Emma Ossington.

One of the Marquis of Melrose's

game-keepers, who had been patrolling some of the plantations for the preservation of the game, that he might prevent any of the dissolute inhabitants of ——— from injuring or destroying the birds, had observed a chaise-and-four flying with rapidity through the park; and after passing through a private gate, dashing with increased velocity along the road.

Surprised that a carriage should, at that late hour, proceed with such astonishing celerity through an unfrequented part of the park, curiosity induced him to enquire of the servant the occasion of their haste; — no answer was returned, and the carriage was urged on with accelerated impetuosity.

When the man returned to the Castle, he immediately communicated these circumstances; and, the story

soon circulating among the servants, they were occupied in conjectures on this extraordinary occurrence.

Johnson soon returned, and informed Lord Ossington that he could obtain no intelligence of Miss Emma; he then mentioned the strange circumstances that were related by the game-keeper.

Agitated and distracted, Lord Ossington ordered his man to conduct the game-keeper to him: it instantly occurred to Lord Ossington, that his daughter had eloped: but who was the partner of her flight?—what could have induced such a desperate procedure? These suspicions and conjectures darted through his mind in rapid succession, while he impatiently and distractedly expected the arrival of the game-keeper.

Radcliffe then remembered that he wished Lord Dashall to join his party

at supper, but could not fall in with him: it immediately flashed on his imagination, that this nobleman was probably the participator of his cousin's flight. Actuated by these suggestions, he hurried through the different apartments, and returning almost breathless, communicated his suspicions to his uncle.

This information concurring so exactly with the story of the gamekeeper, convinced Lord Ossington, that his daughter had eloped with Lord Dashall.

A thunderbolt, launched by the avenging hand of Heaven, could not have transfused a deeper horror into the breast of Lord Ossington. — Had his daughter eloped with a man deserving of her affections and fortune; however he might deplore such an act of disobedience, the distracted father

would have generously pardoned her violation of parental authority: — he was more afflicted by her misguided choice; than offended by her premature elopement. Lord Ossington was but too well acquainted with the character of Lord Dashall; he knew him to be dissolute, unprincipled, and licentious: his nephew had mentioned Dashall's recent ill success at play, and the immense loss which he had lately sustained at Newmarket; he suspected that Dashall merely desired to recover those sums which he had dissipated in the most profligate excesses; and he feared that his daughter's fortune would be absorbed in the destructive vortex of gaming.

Overwhelmed by these distracting apprehensions, Lord Ossington considered, that a sacred duty was imposed on him to exert his most strenu-

ous efforts, to preserve his daughter from the tremendous abyss that yawned to engulph her.

Bewildered and perplexed, he impetuously ordered his travelling-chaise to be prepared; he desired his nephew and Johnson to accompany him; and throwing himself into his carriage, with disordered looks and torturing reflections, he ordered the drivers to proceed with redoubled velocity towards Scotland.

CHAPTER VII.

Lord Horton, a particular friend of the Marquis of Melrose, was appointed Ambassador to the court of Russia; and as the Northern Courts were at that time the theatre of important negociations, Lord Melrose, who was extremely desirous that his son should be initiated in the forms and routine of diplomatic affairs, had solicited his noble friend to admit Lord Henry Delmore into his bureau.

This request had been readily acceded to; and Lord Henry was employed in making the necesarry preparations for his immediate departure.

—The liberality of his father had supplied him with an establishment suitable to his rank and consequence: Mr. Ainsworth was engaged to accompany him, and the Marquis of Melrose imposed the most positive injunctions on the tutor to spare no expense in the collection of any works of literature or science that he might consider as calculated to enlarge the mind, embellish the imagination, or refine the taste of Lord Henry Delmore. Anxious to gratify him and to render his excursion an object of pleasure, as well as business, the Marquis had invited and prevailed on Mr. Mansell to accompany his son to Petersburgh.

This arrangement was most congenial to Mansell's wishes and views; he received the Marquis's proposal with exultation and rapture. Exclusive of a prevailing desire to increase

his acquirements by travel, he hoped, by being perpetually near the person of Lord Henry, to ingratiate himself so completely in his esteem; to interest him so deeply in his welfare; or, perhaps in a moment of confidence, to obtain possession of some important secret; that Lord Henry could not disengage himself from a man to whom he was attached by habit; or separate from one who had acquired so intimate a knowledge of his most private designs.

Mansell was well acquainted with the generous and unsuspicious disposition of his friend; he knew that Lord Henry entertained the most exalted idea of friendship; and he was conscious that, if he succeeded in consolidating and cementing that prepossession, which he believed Lord Henry already entertained in his favour, he should then secure the un-

wearied exertions of a man, who would promote his interest with indefatigable zeal and inflexible perseverance.

Influenced by such powerful motives, Mansell contemplated the approaching journey with indescribable satisfaction, which, as it afforded him unlimited opportunities, would, he hoped, enable him by uniformly humouring the caprices, and constantly adapting his own opinions and conduct to the views, sentiments, and pursuits of Lord Henry, to secure unrivalled possession of his friendship. He had completely eluded the usual discrimination of the Marquis of Melrose: by affecting to applaud his sentiments, — by warmly supporting his ambitious views, — by a constant deference to his opinions, — by uniformly censuring the licentiousness and frivolity of the age, — and by

avowing and displaying unremitted endeavours to augment his fund of moral and political information; Mansell had impressed the father with the most exalted approbation of his character and principles; and he trusted with confidence, that the dissimulation, hypocrisy, and adulation, which had escaped the penetration and procured the friendship of a man conversant in worldly knowledge, and accustomed to political intrigues, would infallibly impose on the liberal, unhackneyed mind of the son.

Mansell's sagacity had long discovered, that Lord Henry possessed unbounded influence over his father: his splendid talents,—extensive information,—elevated sentiments and aspiring views,—so conformable to the hopes and wishes of the Marquis, had captivated his regard, and obtained a powerful ascendancy over his mind,

Every wish and every desire of Lord Henry's heart were immediatly gratified by his indulgent parent; who was accustomed to treat him, with the kindness of a friend, without displaying the authority of a father.

As Mansell had considerably ingratiated himself in the good opinion of the father, he was desirous of obtaining the co-operating assistance of the son, to consolidate the stability and permanence of that attachment. The Marquis of Melrose possessed considerable influence in two boroughs; and Mansell entertained the most sanguine hopes, that by assiduously improving the prepossession and unremittingly cultivating the friendship of Lord Henry, he might prevail on his father to elevate his friend to the distinguished honour of a seat in parliament.

As Mansell possessed considerable talents, fluent eloquence, and an insinuating address, he flattered himself that his introduction to the House of Commons would infallibly be succeeded by the acquisition of opulence and power.

In this predominant and over-weening desire to obtain a voice in the Council of the nation, he was not actuated by the generous ambition of co-operating with exalted statesmen in devoting their labours and talents to increase the consequence, or to maintain the security of the empire; he felt not the noble enthusiasm of those confederated patriots who, disregarding private emolument, selfish considerations, or particular prepossessions, would concentrate the splendour of their abilities, and the dignity of their characters, to unite a nation of free men in defence of their rights,

their liberties, and their country.— No! Mansell's thoughts were alone directed to the accumulation of wealth and the possession of honours; and he relied on his specious manners, his servile adulation, oily eloquence, and persevering assiduity, for the accomplishment of his hopes and projects.

My Reader may perhaps wish to become acquainted with the family of the man, who was destined to be the bosom-friend, and inseparable companion of Lord Henry Delmore.

Mr. Mansell was descended from a respectable family: his father was a barrister of some eminence. Mansell inherited from his father an estate of five hundred pounds per annum. His mother possessed a genteel income; and as she lived in a house belonging to the Marquis of Melrose, and was a lady of respectability, she was frequently in-

vited to the Castle; and her son, George Mansell, was the play-fellow and associate of his children. The intimacy of their boyish days was afterwards matured into friendship at college. His brilliant talents and great literary attainments, induced the Marquis of Melrose to encourage and foster this acquaintance; and the elegant address, the polished manners, the graceful person, and conspicuous accomplishments of Mansell, powerfully recommended him to the favour of the Marchioness.

Mr. Mansell was now in the twenty-second year of his age; in his person the sculptor might contemplate the graceful levity of *Antinöus*, combined with the manly elegance of the *Apollo Belvidere*.—His features were regular and handsome; but his countenance possessed not that open, engaging air, that manifests the benevolence of the

heart. — His address was strikingly pleasing, and, though some considered him too effeminate, most persons were fascinated by the polished urbanity of his manners, and charmed by the perpetual sprightliness and inexhaustible variety of his conversation. — He possessed a fine voice; his performance on the violin was highly extolled by the musical *cognoscenti;* and his graceful form displayed itself to the utmost advantage in dancing. His mind was highly cultivated; his literary attainments were extensive: but his talents were specious and sparkling, rather than solid. — In reasoning, he was often superficial, always plausible, but seldom comprehensive or profound.

Though his eloquence seldom aspired to the soaring flights of exalted genius; — though his mind could not elevate its conceptions to the tran-

scendant energies of virtuous sentiments, he possessed a graceful delivery and felicity of expression that decorated every observation, and diffused an irresistible charm over the most unimportant remarks. His endeavours to improve his understanding were stimulated solely by the advantages which he hoped to acquire, by devoting his talents to the purposes or intrigues of any party, that would promote his interest, or advance his consequence.

Subtle, hypocritical, and unfeeling; the most benevolent sentiments flowed from his tongue, although every liberal affection was an alien to his heart. Perpetually enforcing and encouraging the unlimited exercise of generosity in others; but uniformly preserving in his own breast the most frigid indifference to the wants and miseries of his fellow creatures. He concealed

his vices with such inimitable art;—his dissimulation was so profound and impenetrable;—he could envelope his real sentiments in so impervious a disguise; that while the most discriminating considered him as a model of prudence and virtue, the most unbounded licentiousness revelled in his breast.

Addicted, by inclination, to the most unbridled sensuality, he would endure the greatest fatigues, and submit to the severest privations, to accomplish any object of importance.

He possessed such versatility of talents, and flexibility of disposition, that he could adapt his sentiments and behaviour to the inclinations of persons of the most opposite characters and principles; and he could so exquisitely attemper, and so exactly mould his conduct to their humours,

prejudices, and passions, that each party considered him of their opinion.

His thoughts and actions were unceasingly directed to the acquisition of wealth, and the possession of power; his mind was continually ruminating on plans for his own exaltation, or in considering by what means he could render the influence of his friends and acquaintance subservient to the accomplishment of his ambitious projects.

Even pleasure almost lost its fascination in his eyes, when it militated against his interest: for that, he would cheerfully encounter the greatest perils, and willingly submit to the severest toil: every generous feeling, that ennobles the human heart, was immolated at the altar of selfishness.

Exulting in the prospect of accomplishing the objects dearest to

his heart, Mansell was overwhelmed with joy, when he received the grateful invitation to accompany his friend: he chided the lagging hours for their dull delay; and his gaiety was occasionally overshadowed by transient apprehensions, lest any unforeseen circumstances should retard or prevent their intended expedition.

While the necessary arrangements for his journey were forwarding, Lord Henry Delmore received a note from the Honourable Mr. Dorville, requesting an interview on the following morning.—Lord Henry immediately dispatched an answer, stating that, in compliance with Mr. Dorville's wishes, he might consider him at his service from the hour of twelve till two on the succeeding day.

At the appointed time Mr. Dorville appeared, and was ushered into Lord Henry's study. He apologized to his

noble friend for the ceremonious appointment of a formal visit; but, as he wished to communicate some interesting particulars, and to consult him on a subject of great delicacy, he expressed his conviction, that Lord Henry would not consider him as importunate or intrusive.

"Nothing can afford me more unfeigned satisfaction," said Lord Henry, "than to manifest the respect I entertain for every branch of Lord Harefield's family."

Mr. Dorville then succinctly related the distressing particulars of his sister's disappearance.——He informed Lord Henry, that when he first beheld Maria at the theatre, he was struck with her resemblance to his youngest sister. "As her appearance intimated that she was of coequal age with my long-lost sister," said Dorville, agitated, "I immediately enquired of your mother

the name of the object who had recalled such torturing recollection."

The Marchioness of Melrose stated the accident that had introduced her to her notice, observing that she was totally unacquainted with her family or connexions. Though the disappearance of Miss Dorville was perfectly notorious, her brother had scarcely mentioned the resemblance which Maria bore to his other sister, than, recollecting the mysterious account of Mr. Arnold, Lord Henry suddenly exclaimed: "Gracious Heaven! Dorville, can this lovely innocent be your sister!"

"I confess," resumed Dorville, "that the apparent mystery which attends her situation, has transiently excited that pleasing hope:—my breast is one moment enlivened by the brightest expectations, and, the next, depressed with the most distracting fears.

The information I received from the Marchioness, induced me to call on Mr. Arnold; and I flattered myself that he would communicate such circumstances relative to her birth and connexions, as would either justify my hopes, or, at least, release me from the tortures of suspense. My anticipated certainty was however baffled;—Mr. Arnold merely stated the name of her mother; and, with some difficulty, I extorted from him the duration of their residence at his house; he also intimated that Maria's mother was hourly expected. Since that day, I have repeatedly called at his house; but as her mother has not returned, I have been unable to obtain any additional intelligence. — Permit me therefore, to solicit your friendly assistance in developing this mystery."

"I regret," said Lord Henry, "that

I am ignorant of any means to gratify your hopes, or lull your anxiety."

"Several circumstances," observed Dorville, "which I gleaned from the artless girl, when I met her at Arley Grove, were concealed by Mr. Arnold; and as he professed to satisfy my enquiries, I suspect that he is in possession of some important facts relative to her birth and situation, which he is either desirous to suppress, or apprehensive of revealing.—For some time, I have impatiently expected the arrival of her mother; but the mysterious circumstances I have already heard, and the tedious protraction of her mother's return, determine me immediately to probe this affair to the bottom, and resolve my anxious doubts without further delay."

"Still," said Lord Henry, "I do not perceive how I can be instrumental in disentangling your perplexity."

"I am convinced," continued Dorville, "that Mr. Arnold has not made an ingenuous disclosure. Perhaps he did not wish to unbosom himself to a stranger;—Maria's mother may have enjoined him to silence perhaps;—but oh! I dare not indulge the pleasing hope, he may insidiously conceal her real condition, and I may again clasp a sister to my bosom.—Pardon my agitation! but that reflection raises such a train of contending emotions—!"

Lord Henry, who was deeply affected at Dorville's pathetic recital, pressed him to compose himself; emphatically declaring,

"Only suggest, my friend, how I can be useful in this business; and command my most strenuous exertions, as you now claim my tenderest sympathy."

"I am of opinion," resumed Dor-

ville, more collected, "that if you would condescend to interrogate Mr. Arnold, relative to Maria's birth and family, that he will communicate every particular within his own knowledge, with less reluctance or reserve: but should he hesitate,—should you discover that he is anxious to suppress any circumstance, or to evade your questions, your intimacy with Lord Ossington will justify you in availing youself of the influence of his name; and his tenant will not dare to disregard the son of the Marquis of Melrose."

"I cannot flatter you," observed Lord Henry, "with the hope of obtaining any additional intelligence: my sister and Miss Temple, when they accompanied Maria to Mr. Arnold's house after the fête, were sufficiently inquisitive, I assure you; and your information is co-extensive. Mr. Ar-

nold is considered a man of unblemished character and irreproachable life. I cannot conceive any motive sufficiently powerful to induce a suppression, or any temptation sufficiently alluring to occasion the distortion of the real fact. I mention my opinion however not as an excuse for my own indolence, but to mitigate the severity of disappointment."

Lord Henry then rang the bell, and ordered his horses.

"Dorville," said he, "the Ossington family have continued at Melrose since the fête; you will find them in the breakfast-room with my mother and Arlington; you had better join them and contrive to dissipate the time till I return."

Dorville's conduct, his tender emotion, his exquisite sensibility, and pathetic observations, so dissimilar to

his usual volatility, sprightliness, and flippancy, surprised and gratified Lord Henry. His ardent mind and benevolent feelings, ever alive to sympathize with the unfortunate, and always ready to extend his utmost exertions to relieve them, required no additional stimulus to insure his strongest efforts, or command his most zealous services. The interest which he felt for the lovely girl, whom he had so fortuitously protected; — his regard for Dorville, gave augmented energy and increased poignancy to his sensations: he flew on the wings of friendship to remove the doubts, and quiet the apprehensions of his friend: and while some men would have been ruminating on the time, the mode, or propriety of proceeding on the investigation, Lord Henry had already entered Mr. Arnold's house.

Maria, who perceived him imme-

diately on his entering the garden, ran to the door to receive him. Her animated countenance illumined by joy, bespoke the pleasure she felt at seeing her kind protector; she eagerly enquired concerning Lady Georgina and the family. Lord Henry gratified her by his answers to her repeated questions.

Mr. Arnold had taken a walk into the village; and while the maid was dispatched to desire her master to return home, Lord Henry amused himself by conversing with Maria on the different amusements, that had lately taken place at Melrose Castle; —he asked her opinion of the various entertainments in which she had participated;—and was greatly delighted by her artless observations and innocent remarks, on the different pursuits and scenes in which she had been so recently initiated.

As Mr. Arnold's return was so long protracted, Lord Henry requested Maria to favour him with some music; and the delighted girl, pleased to have an opportunity to oblige him, opened her piano-forte, and sang the beautiful and plaintive air in the "Stranger," accompanying her voice with the instrument. Her noble friend complimented her on her performance, expressing his astonishment that she could execute it with such pathos and correctness.

"Oh! that is not wonderful," said Maria; "this is a very favourite song of mamma's, she is perpetually singing it."

"Maria, my dear," said Lord Henry; "I shall leave the country to-morrow."

"Oh! but I hope," she observed, "that you will soon return."

"No! I shall proceed to-morrow

to Russia, a country far distant from England; and I do not expect to revisit my native land for a considerable time."

"Indeed! indeed!" replied Maria, her eyes suffused with tears; "I am very much concerned; — but you must not go until mamma returns; — she will be so delighted to see you; — and will so much wish to thank you for your kindness to me."

She was greatly distressed at the idea of Lord Henry's departure;—his condescending affability and particular notice had captivated her innocent heart.

The attentions of a man of Delmore's age, are so gratifying to the vanity of a girl of her years, that they excite a fluttering emotion, a tender sympathy, which, though remote from the passion of love, is productive of sensations particularly fascinating to a young mind.

Her uneasiness moved Lord Henry; he told the sobbing girl he would revisit her as soon as he arrived in England; — "But my sister," said he, "will frequently call on you, — and I assure you that Georgina is extremely attached to you, and will experience the greatest satisfaction in promoting your felicity, or increasing your enjoyments."

Mr. Arnold was now returned; and Lord Henry retired from Maria, to pursue the important object of his visit.

"I have called, Sir," said Lord Henry, "to request your assistance, and to require your exertions in obtaining complete information relative to Maria's birth and family."

"To comply with your wishes, my Lord," said Mr. Arnold, "will ever afford me the greatest gratification."

Mr. Arnold was convinced that this

enquiry did not proceed from frivolous curiosity;—he was well acquainted with the philanthropy and benevolence of Delmore's heart:—in every application that the old man had preferred in behalf of the indigent and distressed, he had ever found Lord Henry a liberal donor, and a willing and zealous advocate with the Marchioness of Melrose. He was satisfied, therefore, that this investigation originated from an anxious desire to benefit Maria;—and as he hoped that the result would be productive of infinite advantage to her, he experienced an additional motive to stimulate him to disclose every circumstance relative to her situation with frankness and candour.

"Permit me to impress on your mind," resumed Lord Henry, "that the feelings of my friend are deeply interested in Maria's welfare;—and I

rely on your honour to develop every fact and circumstance that may elucidate her birth."

"My inclination to oblige you, my Lord," replied Mr. Arnold; "my anxious desire to promote Maria's welfare and happiness;—my regard for my own character;—every motive, conspire to induce, when thus solemnly called on, the communication of every particular within my own knowledge.—About two years ago, I received a letter from Mr. Wilkins, a relation of mine; stating, that a lady, with a child, and one female servant, wished to be accommodated in a house in the country, where she could live in complete seclusion. As this proposal was agreeable to my wishes, and as the other arrangements were mutually satisfactory, the family became my inmates.—I confess that I was struck with the ele-

gant appearance of Mrs. Lascelles and the beauty of her child; my mind was busily occupied in conjecturing, what motives could influence so lovely a woman to withdraw from society, where she was calculated to shine so conspicuous an ornament; and to court, at her age, the retirement of an obscure village. My curiosity was still more excited, by remarking that she always selected the most retired walks:—her maid was instructed never to carry Maria to the village;—and she expressly refused to permit me to take her daughter to the houses of my acquaintance. This prohibition sharpened my inquisitiveness; it occurred to me, and I am now more strongly confirmed in my conjecture, that Mrs. Lascelles is a woman of superior condition: her accomplishments evince that she has received a liberal education: she is the sole instructress of

her daughter; and Maria's proficiency in French, dancing, and music, is, I believe, considerable."—

"But do you know nothing of her family, or connections?" interrupted Lord Henry;—"is she married?—did you ever hear where Maria was born?"

"I promised to relate every particular," resumed Mr. Arnold, unmoved by Delmore's impatience, "and I am mindful of my pledge. Her family and relations are unknown to me,—nor have I ever heard the place of Maria's birth. My eager curiosity, and, suffer me to observe, my affection for Maria, have repeatedly urged me to communicate with her mother on the subject of her daughter's birth;—but she has uniformly evaded my enquiries; and shrunk even from the most delicate hints: and when my anxiety has induced me to resume the

topic, she studiously declines, or ingeniously diverts the conversation. From several expressions which I have overheard, when she has been carressing the child, I have every reason to believe that Maria's father is still living."

"But are you convinced," said Delmore, "that the child is her own?"

"I am satisfied in my own mind," observed Mr. Arnold; "that Maria is her daughter. The unbounded affection, the unceasing anxiety, the unremitted care, the tender apprehensions, that Mrs. Lascelles manifests, can only proceed from the overflowings of parental love; and would never be displayed in such vivid colours, nor exhibited with such force, towards the child of another."

"And you never heard," said Lord Henry, "the name of any of Mrs.

Lascelles' family, nor the place of Maria's birth?"

"Never!" replied Mr. Arnold, impressively.

"Excuse me," resumed Lord Henry, "but as my friend is vitally interested in this subject, if I re-urge, that I hope you have not from any motive, however imperative, suppressed any, the most minute circumstance, that may elucidate this mystery.—"

"My Lord," said the old man warmly, "I had hoped, that when I solemnly pledged my honour to reveal the real facts, you would have given me implicit credit for the fulfilment of my promise. My life and conduct ought to have convinced you, that I would neither equivocate, nor conceal. The Marquis of Melrose knows my character; ask your father, my Lord, whether Arnold would

stoop to falsehood, or be privy to imposture."

"Pardon me," said Delmore, kindly pressing Mr. Arnold's hand;—"if the ardour of friendship has momentarily transported me beyond the pale of moderation and politeness, you must be convinced that I have unintentionally offended."

The worthy man, satisfied with the apologies of Lord Henry, resumed his usual suavity.

"I have only to entreat," said Delmore, "that you will be particularly attentive to Maria's welfare: every kindness and favour bestowed on her, I shall consider as an obligation conferred on myself; and on my return to England, I shall avail myself of the earliest opportunity to testify my thanks and gratitude."

He then requested to see Maria;

and, after taking an interesting farewell, Lord Henry proceeded to Melrose, to inform his friend of the result of his interview. Dorville's patience was completely exhausted by Lord Henry's protracted visit; —and his anxiety so restless, that in the hope of meeting his friend, he ordered his horses, and resolved to proceed towards Mr. Arnold's house.— Lord Henry had advanced about two miles, when he encountered Dorville, who eagerly and impetuously pressed him to communicate the intelligence that he had obtained. Lord Henry then informed him of the substance of his conversation with Mr. Arnold.

"I am concerned," said Delmore, "that I cannot remove your suspense, nor dispel your doubts;—though I am convinced, that Mr. Arnold considers Maria as the child of Mrs. Lascelles."

"Are you really satisfied," enquired Dorville, "that the old man has unfolded every circumstance? — But should we admit the truth of his account, it is by no means certain that Mrs. Lascelles is the mother of Maria."

"Of that," replied Delmore, "I can offer no decided opinion; though I am considerably inclined to think that Mrs. Lascelles is actually the mother of the child. I will however pledge my existence for Mr. Arnold's veracity."

Dorville still entertained an expectation, or rather sometimes cherished a hope, that Maria was not her daughter; — he declared that he would prosecute his investigation until he was completely satisfied.

The conversation then changed to Lord Henry's immediate departure. Dorville observed, that he trusted his

excursion would be agreeable and interesting; — and politely declared, that in the extensive circle of his friends, no person would be more gratified by his revisiting England. Lord Henry thanked him for his kind expressions of regard; and the two friends separated with cordiality and regret.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE morning destined for Lord Henry Delmore's journey, was hailed with rapture by Mr. Mansell; and while the countenance of every inhabitant of the Castle was clouded with sorrow and regret, he could scarcely restrain the unbounded joy which rioted in his breast. Mansell considered that the foundation of his fortune was now laid, and that it solely depended on himself to erect the superstructure of his own elevation. — He exulted in the prospect of enjoying an opportunity to display

those advantages with which he was so liberally gifted; and of practising those artifices in which he was so deeply versed, to the advancement of his interest, and the promotion of his views. He felt that

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
"Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

He thought that he now took the river at the flow; and he hoped to be carried with the current to prosperity and honours.

At no moment of his life, did Mansell feel such unfeigned pleasure; never did he experience joy so unmingled with regret, as at that instant, when he entered Lord Henry Delmore's travelling-carriage.

The dread, lest any change of views, or ulterior arrangements, should retard or prevent their embarkation, transiently obscured his brilliant an-

ticipations: but the passing cloud of alarm served only to make his brighter hopes shine out with increased splendour. His dreams of happiness were not disturbed by phlegmatic delays or political changes. They proceeded on their journey with the utmost expedition; and the wind being fair, Mansell and his noble friend immediately embarked for Petersburgh.

While Maria was perhaps repining at the waves that bore Lord Henry Delmore from his native land; the winds wafted to the British shore that being for whom she entertained the most transcendant love and veneration.

Mrs. Lascelles had received intelligence of the death of a relation, a merchant, at Hamburgh, who had bequeathed her some property. As she had completed the necessary formalities to obtain possession of the legacy, she

was hastening from Hamburgh, with all the anxiety and eagerness of maternal affection, to the spot that contained a beloved being, for whom she had encountered the greatest difficulties, and undergone the severest trials.

Imagination cannot depicture greater delight than was pourtrayed in the countenance of every inhabitant of Mr. Arnold's house, on the day Mrs. Lascelles arrived. Maria's heart bounded with ecstacy at the sight of an adored parent; — Mr. Arnold experienced a combination of agreeable emotions; he was pleased at her return, as it relieved him from the constant solicitude of protecting her daughter; and he felt some gratification at the anticipated certainty of satisfying his curiosity: Anna was delighted to behold a generous and indulgent mistress: while Mrs. Lascelles enjoyed the most rapturous sen-

sations, in again clasping to her bosom a beloved child, in contemplating the joy which her presence inspired, and in revisiting her favourite retirement.

But this sunshine of the mind was soon clouded, and this calm serenity ruffled, by her daughter's intelligence.

Maria, who imagined that she should transfuse into her mother's breast the delight she herself experienced, from the recollection of the scenes of festivity that she had participated in at Melrose Castle, eagerly enumerated to her every particular of the entertainments and amusements that she had lately enjoyed.

The perturbation of Mrs. Lascelles' mind was indescribable; — she was agitated by the most tormenting and contending emotions: yet amidst these distressing sensations, a gleam of de-

light shone faintly through the gloom of disappointment and regret.

She recollected indeed that her husband had expressly and solemnly desired that she would continue in the most complete seclusion; — he had impressively stated the injury that would result to her daughter, if their marriage should be discovered by his family. These considerations occasioned the most distressing ruminations: but when she reflected on the pleasure that Maria had enjoyed, on the attention and kindness she had received from the Delmore family, the fond mother experienced some consolation, in knowing that the violation of the father's commands had at least been productive of amusement to his daughter. But this transient pleasure was overpowered by the reflection that this deviation from Mr. Lascelles'

wishes might be succeeded by the most disastrous consequences.

Maria had informed her of the visit to Arley Grove; several persons of distinction had called at Mr. Arnold's house during her absence; and one gentleman had minutely investigated, and inquisitively scrutinized her daughter's birth and family.

Mr. Arnold's conduct was, in her opinion, extremely reprehensible: she had solemnly enjoined him never to permit Maria to visit any person in the vicinity; and he had promised that her daughter should continue in her accustomed seclusion.

Mrs. Lascelles resolved to communicate her disapprobation of his conduct; and to request, that Mr. Arnold would not permit her retirement to be invaded.

The worthy man explained the peculiar circumstances that had, so irre-

sistibly, induced him to violate her injunctions; and Mrs. Lascelles was so satisfied with his candour and frankness, that, though she regretted Maria's visit and continuance at Melrose Castle, she could not be displeased with the affectionate and liberal motives that had prompted his permission. She therefore contented herself by requesting Mr. Arnold to prevent, or at least discourage, a renewal of the acquaintance; she impressively stated that she should consider any visitor as an officious intruder; and she determined, if he did not possess the power or inclination to preclude a similar interruption, to remove from his house.

Since the departure of Lord Henry Delmore, Mr. Dorville had seldom omitted to call every day on Maria.

One evening, he was hurrying to

Mr. Arnold's house with his usual impetuosity; when, as he approached the dwelling, the sound of two fine female voices saluted his ear. The melodious warbling arrested his attention; he could dicsriminate that the dulcet strains proceeded from the cottage; and as he entered the garden, he distinguished Maria, singing in concert with a lady.

Concluding that Maria's mother had returned, Dorville's heart swelled with the most tumultuous and opposing passions: he rejoiced in the anticipation of being relieved from the torturing vicissitudes of suspence; he exulted in the hope that Maria might possibly be his sister; but he was more frequently depressed by the apprehension, that his wishes would be disappointed.

Eager to satisfy his anxious curiosity, and remove his tormenting

doubts, he impatiently enquired for Mrs. Lascelles; and was immediately admitted into her presence.

On his entrance, Dorville was struck with the beautiful countenance, the graceful elegance, and dignified appearance of Mrs. Lascelles. It instantly darted upon his mind, that he was not authorized to invade her privacy, to satisfy his own, perhaps unfounded, conjectures: — she would consider his visit intrusive, or at least officious; and he was more perplexed to remove the probable imputation of impertinence, than occupied by a desire of prosecuting his enquiries.

Mrs. Lascelles received him with politeness and apparent ease; though her bosom was distracted and bewildered by distressing conjectures, on the occasion and consequences of this interview.

When Dorville recovered from his

embarrassment, he apologised for the liberty he had taken in visiting her daughter. He stated, that when he first beheld Maria, he was misled by her exact likeness to the child of a near relation. — "This coincidence," said Dorville, "first attracted my notice and regard; and the engaging manners and fascinating behaviour of your lovely girl, have confirmed my prepossession: her beauty and simplicity so strongly attracted me, that I could not deny myself the gratification of occasionally amusing myself an hour with the dear child's society."

The enthusiastic praises which Dorville lavished on Maria, were a grateful incense to a doating mother; — his behaviour had considerably alleviated her suspicions; and with a countenance illumined with joy, and a bosom glowing with delight, she

gratefully thanked him for his favourable opinion; and politely acknowledged his condescending attentions to her daughter.

He then directed his conversation to Maria, enquiring how she had amused herself since his last visit; and whether she was desirous of experiencing a repetition of the entertainments that she had participated in at Melrose Castle.

The replies of the lovely girl delighted and gratified them; — they were mutually pleased; — Maria was elated with Dorville's kind attentions; his eulogium on the child had enchanted the mother; and Dorville was charmed by the interesting appearance and polished manners of Mrs. Lascelles.

As Maria was almost the constant subject of their conversation, Dorville expatiated on her engaging and

endearing qualities; — he remarked that he could not conceive a higher gratification than to be the parent of so interesting a child: — "a delight," said he, "that can only be clouded by the apprehension of being deprived of so inestimable a treasure."

Mrs. Lascelles feelingly declared, that such an affliction would indeed render her existence burthensome: — "the transient apprehension of ever losing my Maria, produces the most distracting reflections."

"If the privation of a beloved child," observed Dorville, "even by the remorseless stroke of death, be so distressing to a parent, what excruciating agony, what insufferable anguish must that father experience, who is stripped of his offspring by neglect, or whose infant has been ravished from him! — of whose fate he

is uncertain; whose destiny he cannot ascertain!"

Dorville then narrated the particulars of his sister's disappearance, disguising the name, and suppressing the circumstance of her resemblance to Maria.

As he was deeply affected by the tenderest and most afflicting recollections, he related the story with considerable pathos; and Mrs. Lascelles was greatly moved by his impressive and feeling recital.

Dorville riveted his eyes on Mrs. Lascelles' countenance during the whole narrative, and narrowly scrutinized every emotion. She was indeed greatly distressed;—she strained Maria to her bosom, while a tear stole down her cheek: her affection, however, appeared to him only the overflowings of a susceptible heart; he could not discover the pallid hue of conscious guilt;

—no dark dissimulation was lurking in her face; all was open, candid, and serene; her agitations seemed to proceed from a retrospect of those miseries she would have endured, if her beloved child had been snatched from her in so mysterious a manner.

He was more strongly confirmed in Mr. Arnold's opinion, that Maria was the daughter of Mrs. Lascelles: he was so delighted with her elegant manners and polished conversation, that he determined to avoid, or at least delay, the mention of any circumstance that would so violently afflict her.

Some uninteresting conversation then ensued; and Dorville, after apologizing for the length of his visit, retired, with sensations of a more pleasing nature than those which agitated his bosom when he entered Mr. Arnold's house.

If Mrs. Lascelles had been uneasy at

a visit from a gentleman, she was again agitated on the following morning, when Anna announced Lady Georgina Delmore and Miss Temple; who freqentntly called on their young friend.

She now perceived that her retirement would be perpetually invaded; and that Mr. Arnold's house could no longer afford her a complete seclusion.

Dorville was a frequent visitor; and as he professed merely to call on Maria, Mrs. Lascelles could not abruptly forbid his visits. She resolved, therefore, as Mr. Arnold could not prevent these intrusions, to remove to another habitation.

Dorville had repeatedly called at the cottage, with a steady determination to interrogate Mrs. Lascelles concerning the birth of Maria. At every interview, his resolution failed him; she had established so powerful an in-

terest in his heart; he was so gratified by the enjoyment of her society, that he could not sufficiently fortify his resolution to communicate any circumstance that might afflict her: and as he courted opportunities to see her, he constantly postponed the distressing disclosure until the succeeding visit.

Dorville perceived that he could not sufficiently command his feelings to develope a story that would so violently distress her;—but as he was imperatively called on to investigate this apparent mystery, he requested Mr. Arnold to break the affair to Mrs. Lascelles, on the first favourable opportunity.

The worthy man had repeatedly sounded her on the subject of Maria's birth: he wished to unfold the circumstances that Dorville had communicated to him by gentle degrees; as he could

not endure the idea of paining her sensibility by an abrupt disclosure.

Mr. Arnold was ruminating on the time and mode of relating the extraordinary disappearance of Miss Dorville; when Mrs. Lascelles opportunely entered the room.

After expressing her grateful acknowledgements for the politeness which Mr. Arnold had manifested to herself and the tenderness he had evinced for Maria; Mrs. Lascelles informed him that she regretted the necessity that so imperiously constrained her to remove from his habitation: but, as his house was so frequented by company, she must endeavour to procure a more secluded residence.

The benevolent old man, who entertained a great respect for Mrs. Lascelles, and experienced the tenderest affection for Maria, was greatly per-

turbed at their anticipated removal: he declared that he would use every exertion to prevent any future interruption of her tranquillity and retirement; and conceiving this as a favourable opportunity, he explained the interesting particulars of the melancholy occurrence, that had superinduced Mr. Dorville's repeated visits.

The most distracted and torturing reflections immediately agitated the mind of Mrs. Lascelles; her susceptible bosom would, under any circumstances, have been greatly pained by this recital; but Maria's resemblance to Miss Dorville, the coincidence of their ages, appeared to her mysterious, or at least, equivocal: the most excruciating doubts and fears assailed her; she suspected some deception; and she trembled with apprehension lest some artifice was meditated, to deprive her of her daughter.

In a paroxysm of alarm, she wildly seized the hand of Mr. Arnold, and exclaimed:

"Dear Sir, can you join to rob me of my child, to strip me of every comfort?"

Mr. Arnold endeavoured to calm her agitations, and to soothe her sorrows;—he informed her, that no violence or finesse was intended;—that the mistake had solely originated from the strong likeness of Maria to the long-lost Miss Dorville.

He stated that he would pledge his life, from a knowledge of the high consideration and worth of the parties, who had interested themselves in the elucidation of this affair, that no improper or sinister motives had induced this investigation; and that he was confident, they would be perfectly satisfied by her solemn asseveration, that Maria was really her daughter.

Though Mrs. Lascelles was re-assured by Mr. Arnold's emphatic protestations, that no force or stratagem would be employed to remove her child; she received additional motives to enforce the necessity of her departure.

The visits of the Delmore family; the probable publicity of this extraordinary affair, would pervade the obscurity of her retirement.

She was greatly perplexed by the repeated visits of Dorville;—though he professed merely to call on Maria, Mrs. Lascelles was conscious that she would be universally considered as the magnet that attracted him; and she felt the impropriety of such frequent interviews with a young man of rank and fashion:

"For, if a cherub in the shape of woman,
Should walk this world, yet defamation would,
Like a vile cur, bark at the angel's train."

From this combination of circumstances, Mrs. Lascelles was more strongly determined on her removal from this village: but, as her sudden departure might strengthen Dorville's conjectures, or confirm his suspicions, that Maria was his long-lost sister; she resolved, on their next interview, to develope so much of her story at least, as would elucidate her daughter's birth.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Arnold's cottage no longer continued a retreat for a recluse; the obscurity of retirement was perpetually violated by the appearance of the gay and elegant; and Mrs. Lascelles' privacy was repeatedly invaded by the visits of Lady Georgina Delmore and Miss Temple. As her husband had impressively enforced the necessity of seclusion and concealment until his return; and her solemn assurances had been pledged to obey his commands, Mrs. Lascelles was more strongly confirmed in her determination to remove from her present habitation. She

communicated her resolution to Mr. Arnold: the worthy man employed every argument, and even entreated her to relinquish her intention.—Convinced of the propriety of removing from the cottage, Mrs. Lascelles inflexibly adhered to her determination; but, in compliance with the earnest wishes of her benevolent host, she consented to postpone her departure.

As Mrs. Lascelles had resolved on the line of conduct that she would now pursue, she experienced that impatience or anxiety which an ardent mind generally feels to carry her projected removal into execution. She eagerly expected Dorville's promised visit; and she now as anxiously desired, as she had formerly regretted his appearance. Such is the condition of humanity! one moment starting with terror, and apprehension at the presence of an object, which the

next instant we rush with breathless eagerness to meet. The well-regulated mind, should, however, endeavour to appreciate the intrinsic value of those things it desires; and only pant for their enjoyment when they possess solid inherent worth: but imagination too frequently throws her gaudy colourings on every subject; and fancy, like the prismatic glass shedding its variegated rays, distorts the face of nature and simplicity. Our judgement is thus deluded by the false medium through which it views objects; and dazzled by the brilliant colouring of imagination, it too frequently mistakes the illusions of custom for the genuine light of truth and reason. Those errors and prejudices which operate with such pernicious and baleful influence on society, flow from this fountain of deception: mankind, unaccustomed to contemplate the real

nature of things, divested of extrinsic ornaments, can seldom perceive the sublime but simple essence of truth,—and, deluded by external circumstances, they often adopt the fantastic notions and fallacious opinions of the day, as the rule of rectitude and propriety. A constant habit of reflection, or introspection, can alone dissipate the illusory suggestions of fancy; and remove, or counteract, the powerful impressions of prejudice and custom.

The mind of Mrs. Lascelles was not long destined to endure the fluctuation of uncertainty or suspense. On the following morning Maria, who had been walking in the garden, ran into the room to inform her mother that Mr. Dorville had that moment alighted at the door. Her wishes were no sooner gratified than her apprehensions returned: she now almost wished that Dorville had delayed his visit:—she

was indeed solicitous to remove all doubt and suspicion from his mind,—but she felt, that at any other time, she should be more disposed to communicate her story. She received Mr. Dorville with considerable embarrassment;—they both indeed appeared disturbed and perplexed;—though Mrs. Lascelles was anxious to develope every particular, and elucidate every circumstance, relative to Maria's birth, she unaccountably hesitated to commence the recital. Their conversation was constrained and disjointed,—each seemed to avoid the mention of the subject which, almost exclusively occupied their reflections, Mrs. Lascelles almost wished to postpone a narration that would generate such painful emotions; and Dorville could not sufficiently fortify his feelings to advert to circumstances that would occasion such poignant sensations.

A considerable period had passed in desultory observations and trivial remarks on the most unimportant subjects. Mrs. Lascelles, at length summoned sufficient resolution to enter on the interesting explanation.

"Mr. Arnold has informed me," she observed, "of the mysterious and afflicting circumstance that so strongly excited your interest, and prompted your scrutinizing enquiry concerning the birth and family of my beloved Maria. I will not advert to, nor dilate on a subject that must so deeply afflict every feeling bosom, and occasion the most agonizing sensations to a brother. The delicate and considerate manner in which, under circumstances so imperative and extraordinary, and on my part, I am constrained to say, so mysterious, you have prosecuted your investigation, demands my most grateful acknowledgements. The frank and explicit

communication of every material fact, relative to my child, shall evince how highly I appreciate the moderation and politeness of your conduct."

"I am concerned," replied Dorville, "that my anxiety and affection should have compelled me to make any enquiries, that may have occasioned you uneasiness or alarm. Your feeling heart, which sympathizes with a brother for the loss of a sister, will admit my apology for my inconsiderate, but irresistible curiosity."

The peculiar and mysterious appearances," said Mrs. Lascelles, "which so forcibly conspired to produce suspicion and incertitude, would, in my opinion, have sufficiently justified you, even in a more public and unreserved examination."

Dorville thanked her for her condescension and politeness.

"My story," she continued, "though harrowing and distressing to my own

feelings, will, I fear, afford little interest or entertainment.—I am the daughter of an Italian nobleman, of a distinguished family. Addicted in early life to play, he had dissipated the greater part of his princely fortune among sharpers. When our country was invaded by the French, my father, who was strongly attached to the existing government, joined the army of his sovereign; and fell, bravely combating for his king and country."

The afflicting recollection of her father's fate overpowered Mrs. Lascelles: her eyes were suffused with tears; she sobbed, and her voice was inarticulate. As soon as her emotions of sorrow and regret had slightly subsided, she resumed her narrative.

"The troops of the Republic were successful; and their leaders hastened, with ardent eagerness, to execute the revolutionary mandates of their sanguinary and rapacious masters. The

magnificent palaces of our nobles were plundered with a Vandalic rage; the valuable furniture was torn away by hands reeking with their owners' blood; the finest statues and choicest paintings were transported to swell the triumph of the conqueror, and adorn the capital of the invaders. Humanity would shudder at the recital of the desolation and excesses, that tracked the progress of these blood-stained despoilers! My father's mansion shared the general fate.

From this scene of devastation and ruin, I removed to the habitation of my maternal aunt, who resided at Naples. Her house was the resort of all the Englishmen of distinction in that city. Among the visitors who constantly mingled in her parties, was a young Englishman, who united to a vigorous, energetic mind, the most elegant and prepossessing exterior. His ardent

character, the enthusiasm of his sentiments, the extent of his capacity, and the variety of his attainments, combined with a graceful person, polished manners, and engaging address, secured my esteem, and afterwards enslaved my heart. As my family were bigoted to the catholic faith, I was convinced that they would never consent to my union with a Protestant: it would have been fruitless to have endeavoured to obtain the approbation of my friends; I therefore yielded to the ardent persuasion and tender entreaties of my lover, and accompanied him to Lisbon.—I am fearful that I am tedious; but I strive to be concise."

"Proceed! I conjure you."—

"We arrived on the wings of love and expectation, and, on the succeeding day, the marriage ceremony was performed by the chaplain to the English factory. Hours, days, months,

rolled on with unintermitting joy and never-fading delight; — happy in one reciprocal attachment, we courted no extrinsic gratification; nor desired adventitious pleasures. As my husband's income was extremely limited, I was anxious to increase his felicity by securing him the means of gratifying his liberal and philanthropic inclinations. Impressed with this pleasing anticipation, I prevailed on him to return to Naples. My sanguine heart panted to be re-established in the kindness and friendship of my family; and my affectionate solicitude burned to present my father's fortune, as a tribute of love, to the tenderest of husbands.—On my arrival I immediately repaired to the residence of my aunt. She received me with stately reserve, and formal politeness. Her remarks on my rash and precipitate marriage, as she designated it, were

of joy and happiness! how speedily bitter and sarcastic: my family, she observed, was degraded by this union with a heretic;—a nobleman of my own country had made proposals to my uncle; and honour, wealth, and consequence, would have accompanied such a connexion.

"However," she continued, "as the indissoluble knot cannot be severed, I will not discountenance, though I cannot applaud your choice."

"Mr. Lascelles and myself occasionally visited my relations. As my husband proposed to accompany a friend on a short excursion into the country, my aunt invited me to reside with her until his return. This proposal seemed most propitious to my wishes, as I fondly hoped that her powerful intercession would accelerate my settlements with my uncle, and thus immediately secure possession of my father's property. Illusive dreams

of joy and happiness! how speedily were ye dissipated!—Pardon me, for a moment; but such train of torturing recollections croud on my mind!"—

"Suppress, I intreat you," observed Dorville, moved by her distress, "any circumstances that are painful in the narration."

"During two days," she continued, "I enjoyed a state of quietude and tranquillity;—it was a still, unagitated moment,—like that calm,—that aweful pause,—which is succeeded by a convulsion of nature. As our discourse frequently turned on the subject of my marriage, my aunt subtilly endeavoured to transfuse the most injurious suspicions into my breast;—she hinted that my husband's absence was occasioned by the pursuit of an illicit passion;—she insinuated that he had long supported a celebrated courtezan;—and that his licentiousness and profligacy were infamously notorious. The terrors of super-

stition were then inlisted; and the dreadful weapons of our faith were displayed to alarm and paralyse me. My aunt enforced the tremendous consequences of such a disastrous union, and emphatically demanded, if I did not shudder with horror at having purchased a momentary gratification at the dreadful sacrifice of salvation and eternal happiness? One only mode now remains to avert the dreadful vengeance of Heaven; to secure your everlasting felicity; and escape the yawning abyss of destruction that threatens eternally to devour you:—renounce your husband; abjure his religion!"

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Dorville, "can religious prejudices so deform the soul, and infuse a tiger's fury into a female breast?"

"As my affection for my husband was ardent and sincere, and my confidence unlimited; my determination to

preserve my plighted vows inviolable, was firm and unalterable. A week had scarcely passed, during which I was continually exposed to similar persecution, when I was surprised by the unexpected appearance of my paternal uncle. He embraced me with apparent tenderness and cordiality; but I thought that his manner was constrained, and his countenance gloomy and discontented.

"In the evening I was compelled to attend prayers in my aunt's chapel. After the ceremonies and pageantry of the service were finished; the priest, in an artificial and florid harangue, expatiated on the blessings that would attend the true Catholic:—he delineated, in terrific colours, the inevitable and endless sufferings of the unbeliever;—displayed the destructive and hideous consequences of apostacy;—and concluded by exhorting me to

deprecate the wrath of Heaven, by relinquishing my husband, and renouncing his execrable heresy. My uncle superadded the allurements of ambition to the fulminations of the Church. Finding that my attachment could not be weakened or dissolved by the denunciations of superstition, or the enticements of vanity, my uncle's rage was ungovernable;—his countenance was distorted by passion;—with fury in his eyes, and indignation in his looks, he franticly seized my arm, and drawing a poniard, 'Swear, solemnly swear at this altar,' said he, 'never to see your husband more! abjure his detested faith! or this dagger drinks your blood!' Awed by his menacing attitude, (for he held the weapon to my breast,) and overpowered with terror, a death-like sickness seized my heart;—I swooned, and sunk into insensibility."

Here Mrs. Lascelles was so subdued by the violence of her emotions, that for some moments she could not proceed.——As soon as she recovered some degree of composure and self-collection, she resumed.

"When I awoke to reason and recollection, the same expedients were employed, and similar arguments were advanced, to accomplish their infernal purposes. On discovering, that I would neither be cajoled by persuasions, nor intimidated by menaces, to abandon my husband,—three men entered the chapel, and, seizing me in their arms, hurried me through the garden,—my uncle pointing the dagger to my breast, and threatening to bury it in my heart, if I made the slightest opposition, or attempted to raise the least outcry. At the garden-door stood a chaise and four, into which I was forced; my uncle and another gentle-

man, instantly entered: the blinds were drawn up,—and the carriage proceeded with impetuous velocity. For some time, a mournful, a portentous silence reigned;—absorbed in my own thoughts, I yielded to the most distracting, heart-rending reflections, till, overpowered by the poignancy of my sensations, I relapsed into stupor and inanity.

From this state of oblivion I was roused by the terrors of my companions, and the tremendous roaring of the elements. My associates instantly communicated the occasion of their alarm;—the cries of the drivers, and the terrifying celerity with which the vehicle moved, sufficiently confirmed the dangers of our situation. I could perceive by the flashes of lightning which occasionally pervaded the pitchy darkness of the night,—that our road passed through an immense forest, whose sombrous foliage seemed to cast

a deeper horror over the scene. The face of heaven was obscured by black and angry clouds, — rent, as by convulsive efforts, they appeared to open to form a passage for sheets of liquid fire;— loud and crashing peals of thunder roared from the flaming abyss;—a deluge of rain descended; — the jarring elements seemed to threaten universal destruction, as in the last agony of expiring nature. The affrighted horses flew with accelerated impetuosity; — my uncle and his companion endeavoured to avert the impending danger, by throwing themselves from the carriage. I now resigned myself to fate; momentarily anticipating a termination of my woes.

" Scarce a minute had elapsed since my uncle and his friend had precipitated themselves from the chaise; when the terrified animals dashed the vehicle, with prodigious violence, against a heavy waggon. The se-

verity of the shock shivered the wheel to atoms;—the carriage was overturned,—and I received so violent a contusion on my head, that I was for some time senseless. The bleeding of my temple, however, speedily resuscitated suspended sensation. On my recovery from insensibility, I perceived that I was supported by a countryman and a young lad. My uncle's servant informed me, that his master had experienced a dreadful accident; and that the other gentleman was lying in the road almost inanimate.

"I instantly dispatched the man and the waggoner to assist the other servant, (who was waiting with his master,) in conveying my uncle and his companion to this spot. During this interval I interrogated the boy, whether there was any house contiguous, in which we could be accommodated: he replied, that there was an obscure inn about a quarter of a mile distant.

"The servants now returned with their master and his associate. My uncle uttering the most piercing groans, faintly articulated, that he believed his leg was fractured. His companion appeared lifeless and inanimate. I prevailed on the driver, by the promise of a considerable reward, to repose the mangled bodies of my friends on his waggon: I placed myself by their side; and we proceeded slowly to the inn.

"On our arrival, I had an opportunity of beholding my companions;—my uncle's countenance was distorted by the anguish of bodily pain, aggravated by the more acute agonies of his mind: his associate was perfectly torpid; his face was dreadfully lacerated, and his hair and forehead clotted with gore. Beds were instantaneously prepared for the wounded men; and a messenger dispatched to procure medical assistance. The man

speedily returned with a surgeon, who, on examining the condition of the patients, observed, that my uncle's leg was dreadfully fractured: — the clothes of the other gentleman must, he suspected, have been entangled in the wheel, by which he had been dragged some distance, — as his head was so dreadfully bruised and lacerated; and, from his torpidity, he imagined that some extravasated blood had collected on the brain. He immediately proceeded to set my uncle's leg; remarking, that unremitted care, attention, and quiet, were eminently necessary. The surgeon declared that, in his opinion, the other gentleman would not survive the night.

"Never will the recollection of that moment be effaced from my memory! my blood curdled with horror, — the icy chillness of death seized my heart, — when I reflected that this ill-fated wretch, while in the actual com-

mission of a crime, would instantly terminate his iniquitous career; and appear with all his sins and vices at the awful tribunal of his Maker!—no moment left for repentance,—no pause for contrition or remorse!" Dorville requested her to moderate her emotions, and abstain from, or at least to touch lightly on those subjects that created such violent agitations.

"As my countenance," she continued, "was pale and haggard, from the fatigue and terror which I had so lately experienced, the surgeon insisted on opening a vein; and peremptorily ordered me to be conveyed to my chamber. I retired to my couch; but not to sleep:—the various impressions of horror and alarm, that had so recently affected me, floated before my imagination;—my brain was disturbed by feverish rumination;—my frame was indescribably agitated;—in this paroxysm, nature exerted

her powers,—and my darling Maria sprang to light and life. All-bounteous Providence! how dost thou mingle the sweets of hope with the bitter cup of misery, and pour the healing balm of tenderness and sympathy into the bleeding wounds of anguish and despair! The perturbation of my mind, the fatigue and alarm which I had suffered, occasioned a fever; and, for several days, I was delirious and raving. When reason began to re-assume her empire in my distempered brain, I was recalled to recollection and delight, by the tender caresses and affectionate solicitude of an adored husband. My mind, relieved from anxiety and doubt, and cheered by the endearments of my child and husband, soon recovered its accustomed vigour and elasticity: my strength and spirits were daily renovated and confirmed.

"I learnt that the gentleman who

had accompanied my uncle, was the Marquis de C——; that the unhappy wretch died the succeeding day after our arrival, — and that my uncle had been removed in a litter to the *chateau* of a friend. My husband afterwards obtained information that this outrage had been committed, to force me into a marriage with the Marquis De C——. Mr. Lascelles conjectured, that some secret agreement subsisted between my uncle and that nobleman, relative to the division of my property.

"I have, Sir, imposed this painful undertaking on myself to satisfy your mind, and to remove any doubts or surmises concerning the parentage of Maria."

"You have, Madam, unnecessarily, but considerately submitted to a distressing retrospect of such melancholy circumstances; — your solemn assertion," said Dorville, bowing, "would

have convinced me of the fallaciousness of my hopes, and the unjustness of my suspicions."——

"I should, perhaps, have subjoined," observed Mrs. Lascelles, "that the mother of my present servant was nurse to my child. Maria was baptized by the chaplain of the English Ambassador: my servant Anna assisted her mother in her attendance on my daughter, when Maria had scarcely attained her second year."

"Let me conjure you," interrupted Dorville, "to desist. I am only concerned that the ardour of my temper, some mysterious appearances, and your absence, should have excited expectations and doubts, which have revived the most afflictive recollections, and reciprocally occasioned the most torturing sensations. As the villainous machinations of your family were so providentially interrupted, I

sincerely hope that their infamous designs were eternally defeated."

"On our return to Naples, Mr. Lascelles communicated the leading circumstances of this transaction to Sir William H———, the English Ambassador. So unprovoked and daring a violation of hospitality and friendship excited the indignation, and interested the sympathetic bosom of the Lady of the Ambassador;—with that ardent benevolence and cheerful alacrity which distinguish her character, she exerted her influence with the Queen of Naples; and under such powerful protection, we reposed in confidence and security."

Though Mrs. Lascelles' narrative had completely dispelled every suspicion and doubt relative to her child; the interesting disclosure that she had so frankly made, and her present equi-